

# MY NON-VIOLENCE

BY  
M. K. GANDHI

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# MY NON-VIOLENCE



BY  
M. K. GANDHI

Compiled and Edited by  
SAILESH KUMAR BANDOPADHAYA



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Truth and non-violence are the twin pillars on which rested the entire framework of the magnificent edifice of Mahatma Gandhi's glorious life and work, which, according to the eminent scientist Einstein, was so spectacular that "generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth." To the Mahatma, of course, truth and non-violence were the two sides of the same coin. Hence one can understand the importance of non-violence in the working of Mahatma Gandhi's *Weltanschauung* or the philosophy of life.

Propagation of non-violence was no novel or unprecedented act of the Mahatma. As he himself has rightly said, "I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could." Verily, Gandhiji was pioneer in the field of applying the talisman of Ahimsa or non-violence, which until then was accepted by saints as a means to attain individual Moksha or salvation from this material world, for the solution of day-to-day problems of the common man. To him life was an undivided whole and it could not be partitioned into water-tight compartments. Therefore, a true revolutionary as he was, he made it a mission of his life to see that the age-old dictum of non-violence gets its rightful place in the community of the future and all the relations and activities of the society are carried on on the basis of this universal doctrine.

To tell the truth, non-violence today has become a more pressing cry of the entire humanity than in any particular phase of the human history. The tremendous advent in the sphere of physical science has created such lethal weapons, before which the extinction of the human civilization, nay, even the species itself is a matter of a few seconds. In the ancient times when science and technology were in their infant stage, men could afford to be violent. But in the mid-twentieth century, when the world has been divided



into two warring camps, armed to teeth with the latest models of armaments of total annihilation, the very urge of self-preservation has made it imperative on our part to embrace non-violence. Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the well-reputed protagonist of non-violence in modern India, has rightly remarked that this is an age when we must have to make proper synthesis of Vijnana and Atmajnana, i.e. science and self-knowledge. Not only Gandhians like Vinoba but so many others from all over the world have echoed the same voice and have said that without the guidance of the Spirit the present civilization is like a ship without a rudder. And what is the guidance of Spirit if it is not non-violence, i.e. pure love?

In trying to understand Gandhiji and his non-violence we should not overlook one important aspect of the truth. Gandhiji was no philosopher in the dogmatic sense of the term. He did not cut himself adrift from the daily problems and struggles of the mankind and take refuge in a solitary physical and mental corner to formulate his philosophy of non-violence. His was the unique technique of taking active role in the process of the solution of the every-day problems of the downtrodden and in this process he evolved, like a lotus that blooms petal after petal, his non-violence. Hence in the restricted sense of the term, his was a realistic philosophy and that is why he was not tired of calling himself a practical idealist. Whatever he has uttered in this respect was first experimentally proved by him and therefore it is a negation of truth if one says that the teachings of Gandhiji are meant for the Mahatmas alone and not for the man on the street. To such critics the entire life and work of Gandhiji are glaring testimonies.

It is but natural that such an important subject should be a matter of deep interest for all, who are concerned with the wellbeing of the mankind. The Navajivan Publishing House has rendered a unique service to the cause of non-violence by publishing the two volumes of *Non-violence in Peace and War* by Gandhiji, being the collection of his speeches and writings from 1921 to his last day. But as the said two volumes run near about 1000 pages, it was felt essential to present the basic thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi on non-violence

in a handy single volume and the following pages are the outcome of that effort. The editor knows full well how difficult it is to undertake the job of abridging the writings and speeches of a person, who was not in the habit of using one single word that was not absolutely essential. Moreover he was always conscious of his limitations as an editor. But the urge of producing one such volume for the common reader interested to know the views of the Mahatma on non-violence, has provoked him to undertake this arduous job. While editing strict vigilance has been maintained to see that the author's ideas are not distorted. At a few places only the editor has inserted a word or two of his own for the purpose of maintaining the continuity of thought and correct syntax. But such words have been given within brackets, so that they can be distinguished from the writings of Gandhiji. The editor is aware that his efforts are not up to the mark and, therefore, he invites all suggestions for the improvement of the volume.

Before concluding I must make a special reference to the all-out help and co-operation I have received from Shri Jivanjibhai Desai, the Managing Trustee of the Navajivan Trust, without whose active interest in this venture it would not have been possible for me to prepare this volume. I hope that along with me the readers of the present volume would also appreciate his noble effort and sincere endeavour in popularizing the *summum bonum* of the greatest votary of peace of our age.

Sailesh Kumar Bandopadhaya







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# MY NON-VIOLENCE



## THE DOCTRINE OF THE SWORD

I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. Thus when my eldest son asked me what he should have done, had he been present when I was almost fatally assaulted in 1908, whether he should have run away and seen me killed or whether he should have used his physical force which he could and wanted to use, and defended me, I told him that it was his duty to defend me even by using violence.

But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment. Forgiveness adorns a soldier. But abstinence is forgiveness only when there is the power to punish; it is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from a helpless creature. A mouse hardly forgives a cat when it allows itself to be torn to pieces by her. I therefore appreciate the sentiment of those who cry out for the condign punishment of General Dyer and his ilk. They would tear him to pieces, if they could. But I do not believe India to be helpless. I do not believe myself to be a helpless creature. Only I want to use India's and my strength for a better purpose.

Let me not be misunderstood. Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will. An average Zulu is any way more than a match for an average Englishman in bodily capacity. But he flees from an English boy, because he fears the boy's revolver or those who will use it for him. He fears death and is nerveless in spite of his burly figure. We in India may in a moment realize that one hundred thousand Englishmen need not frighten three hundred million human beings. A definite forgiveness would, therefore, mean a definite recognition of our strength. With enlightened forgiveness must come a mighty wave of strength in us, which would make it

impossible for a Dyer and a Frank Johnson to heap affront on India's devoted head. It matters little to me that for the moment I do not drive my point home. We feel too down-trodden not to be angry and revengeful. But I must not refrain from saying that India can gain more by waiving the right of punishment. We have better work to do, a better mission to deliver to the world.

I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the Rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute, and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law — to the strength of the spirit.

I have therefore ventured to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice. For Satyagraha and its offshoots, non-co-operation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering. The Rishis, who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence, were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realized their uselessness, and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence.

Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration.

And so I am not pleading for India to practise non-violence because she is weak. I want her to practise non-violence being conscious of her strength and power. No training in arms is required for realization of her strength. We seem to need it, because we seem to think that we are but a lump of flesh. I want India to recognize that she



has a soul that cannot perish, and that can rise triumphant above every physical weakness and defy the physical combination of a whole world. What is the meaning of Rama, a mere human being, with his host of monkeys, pitting himself against the insolent strength of ten-headed Ravana surrounded in supposed safety by the raging waters on all sides of Lanka? Does it not mean the conquest of physical might by spiritual strength? However, being a practical man, I do not wait till India recognizes the practicability of the spiritual life in the political world. India considers herself to be powerless and paralyzed before the machine guns, the tanks and the aeroplanes of the English, and takes up non-co-operation out of her weakness. It must still serve the same purpose, namely, bring her delivery from the crushing weight of British injustice, if a sufficient number of people practise it.

If India takes up the doctrine of the sword, she may gain momentary victory. Then India will cease to be the pride of my heart. I am wedded to India because I owe my all to her. I believe absolutely that she has a mission for the world. She is not to copy Europe blindly. India's acceptance of the doctrine of the sword will be the hour of my trial. I hope I shall not be found wanting. My religion has no geographical limits. If I have a living faith in it, it will transcend my love for India herself. My life is dedicated to the service of India through the religion of non-violence which I believe to be the root of Hinduism.

*Young India*, 11-8-1920

## ‘ONE STEP ENOUGH FOR ME’

Mr. Stokes approves of non-co-operation, but dreads the consequences that may follow complete success, i.e. evacuation of India by the British. He conjures up before his mind a picture of India invaded by the Afghans from the North-West, plundered by the Gurkhas from the Hills. For me I say with Cardinal Newman: ‘I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me.’ The movement is essentially religious. The business of every god-fearing man is to dissociate himself from evil in total disregard of consequences. He must have faith in a good deed producing only a good result: that, in my opinion, is the Gita doctrine of work without attachment. God does not permit him to peep into the future. He follows truth although the following of it may endanger his very life. He knows that it is better to die in the way of God than to live in the way of Satan. Therefore, whoever is satisfied that the Government represents the activity of Satan has no choice left to him but to dissociate himself from it.

However, let us consider the worst that can happen to India on a sudden evacuation of India by the British. What does it matter that the Gurkhas and the Pathans attack us? Surely we would be better able to deal with their violence than we are with the continued violence, moral and physical, perpetrated by the present Government. Mr. Stokes does not seem to eschew the use of physical force. Surely the combined labour of the Rajput, the Sikh and the Mussalman warriors in a united India may be trusted to deal with plunderers from any or all the sides. Imagine, however, the worst: Japan overwhelming us from the Bay of Bengal, the Gurkhas from the Hills, and the Pathans from the North-West. If we do not succeed in driving them out, we make terms with them, and drive them out at the first opportunity. This will be a more manly

course than a helpless submission to an admittedly wrongful state.

But I refuse to contemplate the dismal outlook. If the movement succeeds through non-violent non-co-operation — and that is the supposition Mr. Stokes has started with — the English, whether they remain or retire, will do so as friends and under a well-ordered agreement as between partners. I still believe in the goodness of human nature, whether it is English or any other. I therefore do not believe that the English will leave in ‘ a night ’.

And do I consider the Gurkha and the Afghan being incorrigible thieves and robbers without ability to respond to purifying influences? I do not. If India returns to her spirituality; it will react upon the neighbouring tribes; she will interest herself in the welfare of these hardy but poor people, and even support them, if necessary, not out of fear but as a matter of neighbourly duty. She will have dealt with Japan simultaneously with the British. Japan will not want to invade India, if India has learnt to consider it a sin to use a single foreign article that she can manufacture within her own borders. She produces enough to eat, and her men and women can, without difficulty, manufacture enough cloth to cover their nakedness and protect themselves from heat and cold. We become prey to invasion, if we excite the greed of foreign nations by dealing with them under a feeling of dependence on them. We must learn to be independent of every one of them.

*Young India*, 29-12-1920

## OUR NEIGHBOURS

It is no part of the duty of a non-violent non-co-operator to assist the Government against war made upon it by others. A non-violent non-co-operator may not secretly or openly encourage or assist any such war. He may not take part directly or indirectly in it. But it is no part of his duty to help the Government to end the war. On the contrary, his prayer would be, as it must be, for the defeat of a power which he seeks to destroy. I therefore, so far as my creed of non-violence is concerned, can contemplate an Afghan invasion with perfect equanimity, and equally so far as India's safety is concerned. The Afghans have no quarrel with India. They are a god-fearing people. I warn non-co-operators against judging the Afghans by the few savage specimens we see in Bombay or Calcutta.

*Young India*, 18-5-1921

## THE FRONTIER FRIENDS

If we had charge of the Frontier, I know what we would have done. We would certainly have died in the attempt to defend the unarmed population of the district. We would have, if necessary, armed the population for self-defence. But what is more, we would have won over the tribesmen and turned them from marauding bands into trustworthy neighbours.

I know that the process of reforming the tribesmen is slow and tedious. It provides poor comfort to those that are robbed of their possessions or their dear ones.

I cannot imagine greater humiliation for a self-respecting man to be dependent, for the safety of himself or his family, on those who he thinks prey upon him. I would prefer total destruction of myself and my all to purchasing safety at the cost of my manhood. This feeling of helplessness in us has really arisen from our deliberate dismissal



of God from our common affairs. We have become atheists for all practical purposes. And therefore we believe that in the long run we must rely upon physical force for our protection. In the face of physical danger we cast all our philosophy to the winds. Our daily life is a negation of God. If then we would but have a little trust in God, i. e. ourselves, we shall find no difficulty with the tribesmen. Only in that case we will have to be prepared at times to surrender our possessions and under certain circumstances our lives rather than our honour. We must refuse to believe that our neighbours are savages incapable of responding to the finer in man.

Thus consistently with our self-respect there are but two courses open to us, to prepare, in so far as we wish to defend ourselves however weakly, against robbery and plunder, or to believe in the capacity of our neighbours to respond to the nobler instinct in man and to endeavour to reform the tribesmen. I apprehend that the two processes will go hand in hand. We must avoid the third at any cost, i. e. reliance in the British bullet to protect us from harm. It is the surest way to national suicide.

*Young India*, 25-5-1921

## 5

## SOLDIERS

One correspondent asks on their behalf as to what would happen to them under Swaraj. As for the first, the Working Committee has shown them the way. Every soldier can easily become a weaver and carder. Carding requires strength of arm which every soldier must have. And a carder in Bombay earns anything between two to three rupees per day. Many weavers of the Punjab have left the handloom for the sword of the hireling. I consider the former to be infinitely preferable to the latter. I refuse to call the profession of the sepoy honourable when he has no choice as to the time when and the persons or people against whom he is called upon to use his sword. The sepoy's services have more often been utilized for enslaving us than for protecting us, whereas the weaver today can

truly become the liberator of his country and hence a true soldier.

What will happen during Swaraj is easily answered. The soldiers will not then be hirelings, but they will form the national militia for defensive and protective purposes alone. They will have a voice in the moulding of the affairs of the nation. And they will certainly never be sent to cut down inoffensive Turks or Arabs in the West or equally inoffensive Chinese or Burmese in the East.

*Young India*, 27-10-1921

## 6

### WHY DID I ASSIST IN THE LAST WAR ?

A correspondent asks some pertinent questions in the following pungent fashion:

"When the Zulus broke out for liberty against the British usurpers, you helped the British in suppressing the so-called rebellion. Is it a rebellion to try to shake off the foreign yoke? Was Jean D'arc a rebel? Was George Washington a rebel? Is De Valera one? You may say that the Zulus had recourse to violence. I then ask, was the end bad or the means? The latter may have been so, but certainly not the former; so you will be kind enough to explain the riddle. In the last war, when the gallant Germans and Austrians were fighting so bravely against a world combination, you raised recruits for the British to fight against the nations that had done India no harm. Whenever there is a war between two races, one has to hear both parties before coming to a decision either for or against any of them. In the last war we had a one-sided version only, and that from a nation certainly not renowned for truthfulness or honesty. You have all along been an advocate of passive resistance and non-violence. Why then did you induce people to take part in a war the merits of which they knew not, and for the aggrandizement of a race so miserably wallowing in the mire of imperialism? You may say you had faith in the British bureaucracy. Is it possible for any person to have faith in an alien people, all whose acts have run so glaringly counter to their promises? It cannot have been so with a person of such high attainments as yourself. So you will please answer the second riddle,

"There is another point to which I should like to refer. You are an advocate of non-violence. Under the present circumstances we should be strictly non-violent. But when India will be free, should we strictly eschew arms even if a foreign nation invaded us? Would you also boycott railways and telegraphs and steamers even when they will have ceased to promote exports of the products of our soil?"

I hear and read many charges of inconsistency about myself. But I do not answer them as they do not affect anyone but myself. The questions, however, raised by the correspondent are of general importance and deserve notice. They are by no means new to me. But I do not remember having answered them in the columns of *Young India*.

Not only did I offer my services at the time of the Zulu Revolt but before that, at the time of the Boer War, and not only did I raise recruits in India during the late war, but I raised an ambulance corps in 1914 in London. If, therefore, I have sinned, the cup of my sins is full to the brim. I lost no occasion of serving the Government at all times. Two questions presented themselves to me during all those crises. What was my duty as a citizen of the empire as I then believed myself to be, and what was my duty as an out-and-out believer in the religion of Ahimsa — non-violence?

I know now that I was wrong in thinking that I was a citizen of the empire. But on those four occasions I did honestly believe that, in spite of the many disabilities that my country was labouring under, it was making its way towards freedom, and that on the whole the government from the popular standpoint was not wholly bad, and that the British administrators were honest though insular and dense. Holding that view, I set about doing what an ordinary Englishman would do in the circumstances. I was not wise or important enough to take independent action. I had no business to judge or scrutinize ministerial decisions with the solemnity of a tribunal. I did not impute malice to the ministers either at the time of the Boer War, the Zulu Revolt or the late war. I did not consider Englishmen, nor do I now consider them, as particularly bad or worse



than other human beings. I considered and still consider them to be as capable of high motives and actions as any other body of men, and equally capable of making mistakes. I therefore felt that I sufficiently discharged my duty as a man and a citizen by offering my humble services to the empire in the hour of its need whether local or general. That is how I would expect every Indian to act by his country under Swaraj. I should be deeply distressed, if on every conceivable occasion every one of us were to be a law unto oneself and to scrutinize in golden scales every action of our future National Assembly. I would surrender my judgment in most matters to national representatives, taking particular care in making my choice of such representatives. I know that in no other manner would a democratic government be possible for one single day.

The whole situation is now changed for me. My eyes, I fancy, are opened. Experience has made me wiser. I consider the existing system of government to be wholly bad and requiring special national effort to end or mend it. It does not possess within itself any capacity for self-improvement. That I still believe many English administrators to be honest does not assist me, because I consider them to be as blind and deluded as I was myself. Therefore I can take no pride in calling the empire mine or describing myself as a citizen. On the contrary, I fully realize that I am a pariah — untouchable of the empire. I must, therefore, constantly pray for its radical reconstruction or total destruction, even as a Hindu pariah would be fully justified in so praying about Hinduism or Hindu society.

The next point, that of Ahimsa, is more abstruse. My conception of Ahimsa impels me always to dissociate myself from almost every one of the activities I am engaged in. My soul refuses to be satisfied so long as it is a helpless witness of a single wrong or a single misery. But it is not possible for me — a weak, frail, miserable being — to mend every wrong or to hold myself free of blame for all the wrong I see. The spirit in me pulls one way, the flesh in me pulls in the opposite direction. There is freedom from the action of these two forces, but that freedom is attainable

only by slow and painful stages. I can attain freedom not by a mechanical refusal to act, but only by intelligent action in a detached manner. This struggle resolves itself into an incessant crucifixion of the flesh so that the spirit may become entirely free.

I was, again, an ordinary citizen no wiser than my fellows, myself believing in Ahimsa and the rest not believing in it at all but refusing to do their duty of assisting the government because they were actuated by anger and malice. They were refusing out of their ignorance and weakness. As a fellow worker it became my duty to guide them aright. I therefore placed before them their clear duty, explained the doctrine of Ahimsa to them, and let them make their choice, which they did. I do not repent of my action in terms of Ahimsa. For, under Swaraj too I would not hesitate to advise those who would bear arms to do so and fight for the country.

That brings to me the second question. Under Swaraj of my dream there is no necessity for arms at all. But I do not expect that dream to materialize in its fulness as a result of the present effort, first because, the effort is not directed to that end as an immediate goal, and secondly because, I do not consider myself advanced enough to be able to prescribe a detailed course of conduct to the nation for such preparation. I am still myself too full of passion and other frailties of human nature to feel the call or the capacity. All I claim for myself is that I am incessantly trying to overcome every one of my weaknesses. I have attained great capacity, I believe, for suppressing and curbing my senses, but I have not become incapable of sin, i.e. of being acted upon by my senses. I believe it to be possible for every human being to attain that blessed and indescribable sinless state in which he feels within himself the presence of God to the exclusion of everything else. It is, I must confess, as yet a distant scene. And therefore it is not possible for me to show the nation a present way to complete non-violence in practice.

*Young India*, 17-11-1921

## MY PATH

I am conscious of the fact that the truth for which I stand has not yet been fully accepted by India. It has not yet been fully vindicated. My work in India is still in the experimental stage. In such circumstances any foreign adventure on my part would be altogether premature. I should be fully satisfied if the experiment demonstrably succeeds in India.

My path is clear. Any attempt to use me for violent purposes is bound to fail. I have no secret methods. I know no diplomacy save that of Truth. I have no weapon but non-violence. I may be unconsciously led astray for a while but not for all time. I have therefore well-defined limitations, within which alone I may be used. Attempts have been made before now to use me unlawfully more than once. They have failed each time so far as I am aware.

I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is. I have not been able to study it. I do not know whether it is for the good of Russia in the long run. But I do know that in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me. I do not believe in short — violent — cuts to success. Those Bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realize that, however much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes. There is, therefore, really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself. But my creed of non-violence not only does not preclude me but compels me even to associate with anarchists and all those who believe in violence. But that association is always with the sole object of weaning them from what appears to me to be their error. For experience convinces me that permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence. Even if my belief is a fond delusion, it will be admitted that it is a fascinating delusion.

*Young India*, 11-12-1924



## WHAT OF THE WEST?

A European friend thus writes:

"What can be done, what would you suggest that could be tried, in favour of the starving millions of the West? By starving millions I mean the masses of the European and American proletariat who are being driven to the abyss, who live a life not worth the name, full of the direct privations, who can nourish no dream of future relief by any form of Swaraj, who are perhaps more hopeless than the millions of India, because the faith in God, the consolation of religion, has left them to be replaced by nothing but hatred.

"The iron hands which press down the Indian nation are at work there also. The devilish system is at work in each of these independent countries; politics do not count as there is a close solidarity of greed. Vice is devastating these masses who naturally try to escape the hell of their life at any cost, at the cost of making it a greater hell, and who have no longer the outlet of religious hopes, as Christianity by siding for centuries with the powerful and the greedy has lost all credit.

"Of course I expect Mahatmaji to answer that the only way to salvation for these masses, if there is any left, if the whole Western world is not already doomed, lies in the application of a disciplined non-violent resistance carried on, on a large scale. But there are no traditions of Ahimsa in the European soil and mind. Even the spreading of the doctrine would encounter huge difficulties; what about its right understanding and application!"

The problem underlying the question so sincerely put by the friend lies outside my orbit. I therefore attempt an answer merely in courteous recognition of friendship between the questioner and myself. I confess that no value attaches to my answer, save what we attach to every considered argument. I know neither the diagnosis of the European disease nor the remedy in the same sense that I claim to know both in the case of India.

I, however, feel that fundamentally the disease is the same in Europe as it is in India, in spite of the fact that in the former country the people enjoy political self-government. No mere transference of political power in India will satisfy my ambition, even though I hold such transference to be a vital necessity of Indian national life. The

peoples of Europe have no doubt political power, but no Swaraj. Asian and African races are exploited for their partial benefit, and they, on their part, are being exploited by the ruling class or caste under the sacred name of democracy. At the root, therefore, the disease appears to be the same as in India. The same remedy is, therefore, likely to be applicable. Shorn of all the camouflage, the exploitation of the masses of Europe is sustained by violence.

Violence on the part of the masses will never remove the disease. Anyway up to now experience shows that success of violence has been short-lived. It has led to greater violence. What has been tried hitherto has been a variety of violence and artificial checks dependent mainly upon the will of the violent. At the crucial moment these checks have naturally broken down. It seems to me, therefore, that sooner or later the European masses will have to take to non-violence, if they are to find their deliverance. That there is no hope of their taking to it in a body and at once does not baffle me. A few thousand years are but a speck in the vast time circle. Someone has to make a beginning with a faith that will not flinch. I doubt not that the masses, even of Europe, will respond, but what is more emergent in point of time is not so much a large experiment in non-violence as a precise grasp of the meaning of deliverance.

From what will the masses be delivered? It will not do to have a vague generalization and to answer: 'from exploitation and degradation'. Is not the answer this that they want to occupy the status that capital does to day? If so, it can be attained only by violence. But if they want to shun the evils of capital, in other words, if they would revise the viewpoint of capital, then they would strive to attain a juster distribution of the products of labour. This immediately takes us to contentment and simplicity, voluntarily adopted. Under the new outlook multiplicity of material wants will not be the aim of life; the aim will be rather their restriction consistently with comfort. We shall cease to think of getting what we can, but we shall decline to receive what all cannot get. It occurs to me that it ought not to be difficult to make a successful appeal

to the masses of Europe in terms of economics, and a fairly successful working of such an experiment must lead to immense and unconscious spiritual results. I do not believe that the spiritual law works on a field of its own. On the contrary it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields. If the masses of Europe can be persuaded to adopt the view I have suggested, it will be found that violence will be wholly unnecessary to attain the aim, and that they can easily come to their own by following out the obvious corollaries of non-violence. It may even be that what seems to me to be so natural and feasible for India may take longer to permeate the inert Indian masses than the active European masses. But I must reiterate my confession that all my argument is based on suppositions and assumptions and must, therefore, be taken for what it is worth.

*Young India*, 3-9-1925

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## TO AMERICAN FRIENDS

It is a privilege for me to enjoy the friendship of so many unknown American and European friends. It pleases me to note that the circle is ever widening, perhaps more especially in America. I had the pleasure of receiving a warm invitation about a year ago to visit that continent. The same invitation has now been repeated with redoubled strength and with the offer to pay all expenses. I was unable then, as I am now, to respond to the kind invitation. To accept it is an easy enough task, but I must resist the temptation, for I feel that I can make no effective appeal to the people of that great continent unless I make my position good with the intellectuals of India.

I have not a shadow of doubt about the truth of my fundamental position. But I know that I am unable to carry with me the bulk of educated India. I can, therefore, gain no effective help for my country from the Americans and Europeans so long as I remain isolated from

educated India. I do want to think in terms of the whole world. My patriotism includes the good of mankind in general. Therefore my service of India includes the service of humanity. But I feel that I should be going out of my orbit, if I left it for help from the West. I must be satisfied for the time being with such help as I can get from the West, speaking to it from my smaller Indian platform. If I go to America or to Europe, I must go in my strength, not in my weakness, which I feel today — the weakness, I mean, of my country. For, the whole scheme for the liberation of India is based upon the development of internal strength. It is a plan of self-purification. The peoples of the West, therefore, can best help the Indian movement by setting apart specialists to study the inwardness of it. Let the specialists come to India with an open mind and in a spirit of humility as befits a searcher after Truth. Then perhaps they will see the reality instead of a glorified edition that, in spite of all my desire to be absolutely truthful, I am likely to present if I go to America. I believe in thought-power more than in the power of the word, whether written or spoken. And if the movement that I seek to represent has vitality in it and has divine blessing upon it, it will permeate the whole world without my physical presence in its different parts. Anyway at the present moment I see no light before me. I must patiently plod in India until I see my way clear for going outside the Indian border.

After pressing the invitation, the American friend puts a number of questions for my consideration:

“Are not the present-day interests of all mankind, everywhere, so inextricably interwoven that no single country like India can be moved far out of its present relationships to the others”?

I do believe with the writer that no single country can remain in isolation for any length of time. The present plan for securing Swaraj is to attain not a position of isolation but one of full self-realization and self-expression for the benefit of all. The present position of bondage and helplessness hurts not only India, not only England, but the whole world.



"Is not your message and method essentially a world gospel — which will find its power in responsive souls, here and there, in many countries, who will thereby, gradually, remake the world?"

If I can say so without arrogance and with due humility, my message and methods are indeed, in their essentials, for the whole world, and it gives me keen satisfaction to know that it has already received a wonderful response in the hearts of a large and daily growing number of men and women of the West.

"If you demonstrate your message in the language only of the East and in terms only of Indian emergencies, is there not grave danger that inessentials will be confused with fundamentals, that some features which correspond only to extreme situations in India will be wrongly understood to be vital in the universal sense?"

I am alive to the danger pointed out by the writer, but it seems to be inevitable. I am in the position of a scientist who is in the midst of a very incomplete experiment and who, therefore, is unable to forecast large results and larger corollaries in a language capable of being understood. In the experimental stage, therefore, I must run the risk of the experiment being misunderstood, as it has been and probably still is in many places.

"Ought you not to come to America (which, in spite of all her faults, is perhaps, potentially, the most spiritual of all living peoples) and tell the world what your message means in terms of Western, as well as Eastern, civilization?"

People in general will understand my message through its results. The shortest way, therefore, perhaps, of making it effectively heard is to let it speak for itself, at any rate for the time being. •

"For example, should the Western followers of your inspiration preach and practise the spinning wheel?"

It is certainly not necessary for the Western people to preach and practise the spinning wheel unless they will do so out of sympathy, or for discipline, or with a view to applying their matchless inventive faculty to making the spinning wheel a better instrument, while retaining its essential characteristic as a cottage industry. But the message of the spinning wheel is much wider than its



circumference. Its message is one of simplicity, service to mankind, living so as not to hurt others, creating an indissoluble bond between the rich and the poor, capital and labour, the prince and the peasant. That larger message is naturally for all.

"Is your condemnation of railroads, doctors, hospitals, and other features of modern civilization essential and unalterable? Should we not, first, try to develop a spirit great enough to spiritualize the machinery and the organized, scientific and productive powers of modern life?"

My condemnation of railroads etc. whilst true where it stands, has little or no bearing on the present movement which disregards none of the institutions mentioned by the writer. In the present movement I am attacking neither railroads nor hospitals; but in an ideal State they seem to me to have little or no place. The present movement is just the attempt the writer desires. Yet it is not an attempt to spiritualize the machinery — because that seems to me an impossible task — but to introduce, if it is at all possible, a human or the humane spirit among the men behind the machinery. Organization of machinery for the purpose of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few and for the exploitation of many, I hold to be altogether wrong. Much of the organization of machinery of the present age is of that type. The movement of the spinning wheel is an organized attempt to displace machinery from that state of exclusiveness and exploitation and to place it in its proper state. Under my scheme, therefore, men in charge of machinery will think not of themselves or even of the nation to which they belong but of the whole human race. Thus Lancashire men will cease to use their machinery for exploiting India and other countries, but on the contrary, they will devise means of enabling India to convert in her own villages her cotton into cloth. Nor will Americans, under my scheme, seek to enrich themselves by exploiting the other races of the earth through their inventive skill.

"Is it not possible, in conditions so favourable as America's, to clarify and advance the evolution of the best human consciousness into such purpose and power, courage and beneficence, as

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shall liberate the souls of India's millions, and of all men everywhere?"

It is undoubtedly possible. Indeed it is my hope that America will seek the evolution of the best human consciousness; but that time is perhaps not yet. Probably it will not be before India has found her own soul. Nothing will please me more than to find America and Europe making the difficult path of India as easy as it is possible for them to do. They can do so by withdrawing the temptations in India's way and by encouraging her in her attempt to revive her ancient industries in her own villages.

"Why is it that people like myself, in every country, are grateful to you and eager to follow you? Is it not for two reasons, chiefly:

First: Because the next and basic need throughout the world is for a new spiritual consciousness — a realization, in the thought and feeling of average people, of the equal divinity of all human beings, and the unity, brotherhood, of all?

Second: Because you, more than any other widely known man, have this consciousness, together with the power to arouse it in others?"

I can only hope that the writer's estimate is true.

"It is a world need — is it not? — to which you have the best answer that God has vouchsafed to man. How can your mission be fulfilled in India alone? If my arm or leg could be vitalized to an extent far beyond the balance of my body, would that make for my general health, or even for the permanent best good of the one favoured member?"

I am fully aware that my mission cannot be fulfilled in India alone, but I hope I am humble enough to recognize my limitations and to see that I must keep for the time being to my restricted Indian platform till I know the result of the experiment in India itself. As I have already replied, I should like to see India free and strong so that she may offer herself as a willing and pure sacrifice for the betterment of the world. The individual, being pure, sacrifices himself for the family the latter for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province, the province for the nation, the nation for all.

"May I even submit — with deep reverence for your message — that possibly your own vision and inspiration would benefit by adjustment to the world instead of only, or chiefly, to India?"

I recognize the considerable force of the foregoing statement. It is not at all impossible that a visit to the West may give me not a wider outlook — for I have endeavoured to show that it is the widest possible — but it may enable me to discover new methods of realizing the outlook. If such is my need, God will open the way for me.

"Is the political form of government, in India or anywhere, so important as the average individual's soul force — his courageous expression of the best inspiration he can derive from the divine spirit within and all about him?"

The average individual's soul force is any day the most important thing. The political form is but a concrete expression of that soul force. I do not conceive the average individual's soul force as distinguished and existing apart from the political form of government. Hence I believe that after all a people has the government which it deserves. In other words, self-government can only come through self-effort.

"Is not the basic need, everywhere, for the clarification and development of this soul force in individuals — beginning, possibly, with a few people and spreading like a divine contagion to the many?"

It is indeed.

"You teach, rightly, that the faithful development of such soul force in India will assure India's freedom. Will it not everywhere shape all political, economic and international institutions including the issues of peace or war? Can those forms of human civilization be made radically superior in India to the rest of the world — now, when all mankind are neighbours?"

I have already answered this question in the preceding paragraphs. I have claimed in these pages before now that India's freedom must revolutionize the world's outlook upon peace and war. Her impotence affects the whole of mankind.

"You know, better than I or anyone, how all these questions should be answered. I chiefly seek to express my eager faith in your gospel, my hungry desire for your leadership in solving the urgent



problems of America and of all mankind. Therefore, will you graciously remember that, if (or when) the time may come that India's progress in the directions you have so inspiringly outlined appears to pause — waiting for the Western world to come up along-side — then we of the West stand urging you to give us a few months of your time and your personal presence. My own feeling is that, if you will call us and instruct us, we (your uncounted followers scattered obscurely over the wide earth) will join our lives to yours in the discovery and realization of a new and noble, world-wide Commonwealth of the Spirit, in which man's age-old dreams of Brotherhood, Democracy, Peace, and Soul Progress shall characterize the daily life of average people — In India, England, America, and everywhere."

I wish I had confidence in my leadership on the world platform. I have no false modesty about me. If I felt the call within, I would not wait a single second but straightway respond to an invitation so cordial as this. But with my limitations of which I am painfully conscious, I feel somehow that my experiment must be restricted to a fragment. What may be true of the fragment is likely to be true of the whole. It is true indeed that India's progress in the direction I desire seems to have come to a pause ; but I think that it only seems so. The little seed that was sown in 1920 has not perished. It is, I think, taking deep root. Presently it will come out as a stately tree. But if I am labouring under a delusion, I fear that no artificial stimulus that my visit to America may temporarily bring, can revive it. I am pining for the assistance of the whole world. I see it coming. The urgent invitation is one of the many signs. But I know that we shall have to deserve it before it comes upon us like a mighty flood, a flood that cleanses and invigorates.

*Young India, 17-9-1925*

## COMPULSORY MILITARY TRAINING

An Allahabad graduate writes:

"I am a registered graduate of the Allahabad University. I am entitled to vote for a candidate seeking election to the Allahabad University Court.

Exception has been taken to my opposition to making military training compulsory in the universities. On this point I seek your opinion through the columns of *Young India*. My view briefly is this:

I admit that under a Swaraj Government our young men would be required to take to the army as a career and we shall have to encourage that spirit. But under an alien government I feel there is absolutely no security that these university corps would not be used against the Indian nation, as the Indian army has been used in the past. Moreover, would it not be adding another link to the chain of moral slavery, if our young men are *compelled* to take up military training? Does it not clash with the ideal of a university, where at least we can expect a free atmosphere for growth? Would it not cast our ideals in a militarist mould? My information about foreign universities is limited, but so far as I could gather I understand there is no compulsion even in universities of free countries like England and America. Even if we ignore political considerations, should we not allow the individual his freedom of conscience to preserve which large numbers of Englishmen went to jail during the war? All of them were not afraid to die.

These are considerations which deserve fullest attention. On the other hand, compulsion in physical training I would gladly support — as a matter of fact, I advocate. I feel that, if it is made compulsory, all the requirements of a university would be met.

We should not shut the doors of the university against those who hold different views on life or politics. There is already too much of cramping in these institutions."

As a pacifist by religion I heartily endorse all that my correspondent says about compulsory military training in the universities. But the argument seems to be sound even from the purely utilitarian and national standpoint. Not only can there be no security against the use being

made of university corps for purposes antagonistic to the national interest, but whilst the Government retain its anti-national character there is every likelihood of these corps being used against the nation on due occasions. What, for instance, could prevent a future Dyer from using these university men for enacting another Jalianwalla Bagh? May not young men themselves offer their services for an expedition against the innocent Chinese or the equally innocent Tibetans when their subjection is felt necessary in the interest of imperial commerce? Some of the young volunteers who served during the war justified their action by saying that thereby they gained experience in the art of war—just the reason which consciously or unconsciously prompted some of the Frontier expeditions. Those who run empires successfully have an instinctive knowledge of human nature. It is not deliberately bad or wicked. It acts excellently under a high impulse. And thousands of young men, who, before they join any corps, must take the oath of allegiance and must on scores of occasions salute the Union Jack, will naturally want to give a good account of their loyalty and willingly shoot down their fellowmen upon receiving from their superiors orders to fire. Whilst, therefore, even as an out-and-out believer in Ahimsa I can understand and appreciate military training for those who believe in the necessity of the use of arms on given occasions, I am unable to advocate the military training of the youth of the country under the Government so long as it remains utterly irresponsible to the needs of the people; and I should be against compulsory military training in every case and even under a national Government. Those who do not wish to take the military training should not be debarred from joining public universities. Physical culture stands on a different basis altogether. It can be and should be part of any sound educational scheme even as many other subjects are.

*Young India*, 24-9-1925

## FROM EUROPE

When I think of my littleness and my limitations on the one hand and of the expectations raised about me on the other, I become dazed for the moment; but I come to myself as soon as I realize that these expectations are a tribute not to me, a curious mixture of Jekyll and Hyde, but to the incarnation, however imperfect but comparatively great, in me of the two priceless qualities of truth and non-violence. I must, therefore, not shirk the responsibility of giving what aid I can to fellow seekers after Truth from the West.

I have already dealt with a letter from America. I have before me one from Germany. It is a closely reasoned letter. It has remained with me for nearly a month. At first I thought I would send a private reply and let it be published in Germany if the correspondent desired it. But having re-read the letter I have come to the conclusion that I should deal with it in these columns. I give the letter below in full:

"Not only India but also the rest of the earth has heard your message of Satyagraha and Swadeshi. A great number of young people in Europe believe in your creed. They see in it a new attitude to political things put into action, of which till now they had only dreamed.

But also among the young people who are convinced of the truth of your message are many who dissent from some details of your demands on men which seem wrong to them. In their name is this letter written.

In answer to a question you declared on the 21st of March, 1921, that Satyagraha demands absolute non-violence, and that even a woman who is in danger of being violated must not defend herself with violence. On the other hand, it is known that you recommended the punishment of General Dyer by the English Government, which shows that you see the necessity for law guaranteed through violence. From this I can but conclude that you do not object to capital punishment and so do not condemn



killing in general. You value life so low that you allow thousands of Indians to lose theirs for Satyagraha; and doubtless you know that the least interference with the life of men — imprisonment — is mainly based on the same principle as the strongest — killing — for in each case men are caused by an outside force to diverge from their Dharma. A man who thinks logically knows that it is the same principle that causes his imprisonment for a few days or his execution, and that the difference is only in the size, not in the kind, of interference. He knows, too, that a man who stands for punishment in general must not shrink from killing.

You see in non-co-operation not an ideal only but also a safe and quick way to freedom for India, a way possible only where a whole population has to revolt against a Government that has the force of arms. But when a whole State wants to get its rights from another State, the principle of non-co-operation is powerless, for this other one may get a number of other States to form an alliance with it even when some of the other States remain neutral. Not until a real League of Nations exists, to which every State belongs, can non-co-operation become a real power, since no State can afford to be isolated from all the others. That is why we fight for the League of Nations; but that is also the reason why we try to retain a strong police force, lest internal revolts and disorder should make all foreign policy impossible. That is why we understand that other Governments are doing what they forbade us to do, arming themselves in case of an attack by their enemies. They are, for the time being, obliged to do so, and we really ought to do the same if we do not want to be continually violated. We hope that you will see our point. If you do, we should be very much obliged to you if you would say so in answer to this letter, or it is necessary that the youth of Europe learns your true attitude to these questions. But please do not think that we want you to forswear something that is one of the main points of your creed — Satyagraha.

But we see Satyagraha not in an absolute non-violence which never, nowhere, has been really carried out, even by you, or even by Christ himself who drove the usurers out of the temple. With us Satyagraha is the unreserved disposition to brotherhood and sacrifice which you are showing us so splendidly with the Indian people; and we hope to be growing into the same state of mind, since it has been understood that a system may be wicked but never a whole class or a whole people (you wrote about this on the 13th

of July, 1921), and that one ought to feel pity but not hatred for the blind defenders of wickedness. Men who come to understand this are taking their first steps on the new way to brotherhood between all men; and this way will lead to the goal, to the victory of truth, to Satyagraha.

We ask you in your answer not only to advise us to fight for our country in the way we think right, but we would very much like to know what you think to be right, especially how you justify an entire non-violence which we see as a resignation to all real fighting against wickedness and for this reason wicked in itself — as we would call a policeman wicked who let a criminal escape unpunished.

Our conviction is that we ought to follow our own Dharma first, and before all that we ought to live the life designed for us by God, but that the right and the duty is given to us to interfere with the life of our fellow-men when they ask us to do so or when we see in such interference a way to fight a threatening evil for all the world. We believe that, otherwise one is not right in interfering, for only God can see through the soul of men and judge what is the right way for men; and we believe that there is no greater sacrilege to be found than to assume the place of God — which sacrilege we believe the English people to be guilty of, as they think to have the mission to interfere with people all over the world.

For this reason we do not understand how you can recommend to married people to deny themselves to each other without mutual agreement, for such an interference with the rights given by marriage can drive a man to crimes. You ought to advise divorce in those cases.

Please answer these our questions. We are so glad to have the model given by you that we want very much to be quite clear about the right way to live up to your standard."

In my travels I have not the file of *Young India* before me, but there is no difficulty about my endorsing the statement that "Satyagraha demands absolute non-violence, and that even a woman who is in danger of being violated must not defend herself with violence." Both these statements relate to an ideal state, and therefore are made with reference to those men and women who have so far purified themselves as to have no malice, no anger, no violence in them. That does not mean that the woman

in the imagined case would quietly allow herself to be violated. In the first instance, such a woman would stand in no danger of violence; and in the second, if she did, without doing violence to the ruffian she would be able completely to defend her honour.

But I must not enter into details. Even women who can defend themselves with violence are not many. Happily, however, cases of indecent assaults are not also very many. Be that as it may, I believe implicitly in the proposition that perfect purity is its own defence. The veriest ruffian becomes for the time being tame in the presence of resplendent purity.

The writer is not correctly informed about my attitude in regard to General Dyer. He would be pleased to know that not only did I not recommend any punishment of General Dyer, but even my colleagues, largely out of their generous regard for me, waived the demands for punishment. What, however, I did ask for, and I do press for even now, is the stopping of the pension to General Dyer. It is no part of the plan of non-violence to pay the wrong-doer for the wrong he does, which practically would be the case if I became a willing party to the continuation of the pension to General Dyer. But let not me be misunderstood. I am quite capable of recommending even punishment to wrong-doers under conceivable circumstances; for instance, I would not hesitate under the present state of society to confine thieves and robbers, which is in itself a kind of punishment. But I would also admit that it is not Satyagraha, and that it is a fall from the pure doctrine. That would be an admission, not of the weakness of the doctrine but the weakness of myself. I have no other remedy to suggest in such cases in the present state of society. I am therefore satisfied with advocating the use of prisons more as reformatories than as places of punishment.

But I would draw the distinction between killing and detention or even corporal punishment. I think that there is a difference not merely in quantity but also in quality. I can recall the punishment of detention. I can make reparation to the man upon whom I inflict corporal punishment. But once a man is killed, the punishment

is beyond recall or reparation. God alone can take life, because He alone gives it.

I hope there is no confusion in the writer's mind when he couples the self-immolation of a Satyagrahi with the punishment imposed from without. But in order to avoid even a possibility of it, let me make it clear that the doctrine of violence has reference only to the doing of injury by one to another. Suffering injury in one's own person is, on the contrary, of the essence of non-violence and is the chosen substitute for violence to others. It is not because I value life low that I can countenance with joy thousands voluntarily losing their lives for Satyagraha, but because I know that it results in the long run in the least loss of life, and, what is more, it ennobles those who lose their lives and morally enriches the world for their sacrifice. I think that the writer is correct in saying that non-co-operation is not merely an ideal but also "a safe and quick way to freedom for India". I do suggest that the doctrine holds good also as between States and States. I know that I am treading on delicate ground if I refer to the late war. But I fear that I must, in order to make the position clear. It was a war of aggrandizement, as I have understood, on either part. It was a war for dividing the spoils of the exploitation of weaker races — otherwise euphemistically called the world commerce. If Germany today changed her policy and made a determination to use her freedom, not for dividing the commerce of the world but for protecting, through her moral superiority, the weaker races of the earth, she could certainly do that without armament. It would be found that before general disarmament in Europe commences, as it must some day unless Europe is to commit suicide, some nation will have to dare to disarm herself and take large risks. The level of non-violence in that nation, if that event happily comes to pass, will naturally have risen so high as to command universal respect. Her judgments will be unerring, her decisions will be firm, her capacity for heroic self-sacrifice will be great, and she will want to live as much for other nations as for herself. I may not push this delicate subject any further. I know that I am writing in a theoretical way upon



a practical question without knowing all its bearings. My only excuse is, if I understand it correctly, that that is what the writer has wanted me to do.

I do justify entire non-violence, and consider it possible in relation between man and man and nations and nations; but it is not "a resignation from all real fighting against wickedness". On the contrary, the non-violence of my conception is a more active and more real fighting against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness. I contemplate a mental, and therefore a moral, opposition to immoralities. I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper-edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance. The resistance of the soul that I should offer instead would elude him. It would at first dazzle him, and at last compel recognition from him, which recognition would not humiliate him but would uplift him. It may be urged that this again is an ideal state. And so it is. The propositions from which I have drawn my arguments are as true as Euclid's definitions, which are none the less true, because in practice we are unable even to draw Euclid's line on a blackboard. But even a geometrician finds it impossible to get on without bearing in mind Euclid's definitions. Nor may we, the German friend, his colleagues and myself, dispense with the fundamental propositions on which the doctrine of Satyagraha is based.

There remains for me now only one ticklish question to answer. In a most ingenious manner the writer has compared the English arrogation of the right of becoming tutors to the whole world to my views on relations between married people. But the comparison does not hold good. The marriage bond involves seeing each other only by mutual agreement. But surely abstention requires no consent. Married life would be intolerable, as it does become, when one partner breaks through all bonds of restraint. Marriage confirms the right of union between two partners to the exclusion of all the others when in their joint opinion they consider such union to be desirable. But it confers no right upon one partner to demand obedience of the other

to one's wish for union. What should be done when one partner on moral or other grounds cannot conform to the wishes of the other is a separate question. Personally, if divorce was the only alternative, I should not hesitate to accept it, rather than interrupt my moral progress — assuming that I want to restrain myself on purely moral grounds.

*Young India*, 8-10-1925

## 12

## WAR OR PEACE ?

The way of peace is the way of truth. Truthfulness is even more important than peacefulness. Indeed, lying is the mother of violence. A truthful man cannot long remain violent. He will perceive in the course of his search that he has no need to be violent, and he will further discover that so long as there is the slightest trace of violence in him, he will fail to find the truth he is searching.

There is no half way between truth and non-violence on the one hand, and untruth and violence on the other. We may never be strong enough to be entirely non-violent in thought, word and deed. But we must keep non-violence as our goal and make steady progress towards it. The attainment of freedom, whether for a man, a nation or the world, must be in exact proportion to the attainment of non-violence by each. Let those, therefore, who believe in non-violence as the only method of achieving real freedom keep the lamp of non-violence burning bright in the midst of the present impenetrable gloom. The truth of a few will count; the untruth of millions will vanish even like chaff before whiff of wind.

*Young India*, 20-5-1926

## HAS NON-VIOLENCE LIMITS?

The following is an extract from a detailed letter from a correspondent who gives his full name and address:

"You may know what is happening to Congress workers in Madras. During the last two days the Justice Party men have excelled themselves in their abominations. Shri... accompanied by Shri... was canvassing votes for Shri..., the Congress candidate. A group of Justice men who kept following Shri... and others when they came near the Justice candidate's house suddenly surrounded the Congress workers and spat upon... and ...'s faces. You know, none better, what indignity it is to be spat upon. Has communalism been able to demoralize public life and work to such a depth? The object of addressing you these few words is to ask you to enunciate your theory of non-violence with reference to what a Congressman should do under circumstances of such grave indignity and insult. There have also been assaults upon.... So far as our attitude towards the Government is concerned, we admit it is expedient to be non-violent in conduct. But is that attitude to be continued in relation to our own misguided and cruel countrymen who take to assaulting, spitting, and to throwing night-soil on peaceful Congress workers? May I also bring to your notice that Congress sympathizers are many, while the paid hooligans are counted on one's fingers, so that, if we only want to put a stop to hooliganism, we can do it effectively by resorting to violent methods? But we happen to be members of an organization pledged to non-violence. The provocation is increasing every day, and it may not be possible for Congress workers to restrain the youthful followers from taking the law into their own hands. Therefore, may I ask you to state if private defence is compatible with non-violence and with what qualifications it should be exercised? The hooligan tactics of the Justice Party are testing our faith in non-violence very severely. Therefore we in Madras will greatly benefit by your advice at this critical moment."

I have purposely erased names of men and places; for, their discovery is not required for my purpose. Time for expedient non-violence passed away long ago. Those who cannot be non-violent at heart are under no obligation

to be non-violent under the circumstances mentioned by the correspondent. Though non-violence is the creed of the Congress, nobody now refers to the creed for being or remaining non-violent. Every Congressman who is non-violent, is so because he cannot be otherwise. My advice, therefore, emphatically is that no one need refer to me or any other Congressman for advice in the matter of non-violence. Everyone must act on his own responsibility, and interpret the Congress creed to the best of his ability and belief. I have often noticed that weak people have taken shelter under the Congress creed or under my advice, when they have simply, by reason of their cowardice, been unable to defend their own honour or that of those who were entrusted to their care. I recall the incident that happened near Bettiah when non-co-operation was at its height. Some villagers were looted. They had fled, leaving their wives, children and belongings to the mercy of the looters. When I rebuked them for their cowardice in thus neglecting their charge, they shamelessly pleaded non-violence. I publicly denounced their conduct and said that my non-violence fully accommodated violence offered by those who did not feel non-violence and who had in their keeping the honour of their womenfolk and little children. Non-violence is not a cover for cowardice, but it is the supreme virtue of the brave. Exercise of non-violence requires far greater bravery than that of swordsmanship. Cowardice is wholly inconsistent with non-violence. Translation from swordsmanship to non-violence is possible and, at times, even an easy stage. Non-violence, therefore, presupposes ability to strike. It is a conscious, deliberate restraint put upon one's desire for vengeance. But vengeance is any day superior to passive, effeminate and helpless submission. Forgiveness is higher still. Vengeance too is weakness. The desire for vengeance comes out of fear of harm, imaginary or real. A dog barks and bites when he fears. A man who fears no one on earth would consider it too troublesome even to summon up anger against one who is vainly trying to injure him. The sun does not wreak vengeance upon little children who throw dust at him. They only harm themselves in the act.



I do not know whether the statements made by the correspondent about the misdeeds of the Justice Party men are true. Perhaps there is another side to the story. But, assuming the truth of the statements, I can only congratulate those who were spat upon, or assaulted, or had night-soil thrown upon them. No injury has happened to them, if they had the courage to suffer the insult without even mental retaliation. But it was wholly wrong on their part to suffer it, if they felt irritated but refrained out of expedience from retaliating. A sense of self-respect disdains all expedience. But I wonder what kind of punishment could be meted out by distinguished Congressmen who, as the correspondent states, were too numerous for the few hooligans of the Justice Party. Were they to return night-soil with night-soil, spitting with spitting, and abuse with abuse? Or would the self-respect of this numerous party be better consulted by ignoring the few hooligans? When non-co-operation was the fashion, I know what was done to hooligans who tried to disturb meetings. They were held down by volunteers who caused them no hurt, but, if they continued to howl, their howling was ignored. I know that even in those days in several cases the law of non-violence was broken, and any man who dared to disturb the meetings or put in a word of opposition was howled down by the violent majority or sometimes even roughly handled to the discredit of the majority and the movement which they so thoughtlessly betrayed and misrepresented. I suggest also to this Congressman and to those whom he may represent that, if the object is to win over the Justice Party or any other Party to the Congress, then they should be treated gently even though they may act harshly. If it is to suppress all opponents, then double retaliation or Dyerism is the chosen remedy. Whether that can bring us any nearer Swaraj is of course another question.

But all my advice is useless where conviction is wanting. Let every Congressman, therefore, weigh all the pros and cons, then make his definite choice and act accordingly, irrespective of consequences. He will then have acted truly even though it may be mistakenly. A thousand mistakes unconsciously made are better than the most

scrupulously correct conduct without conviction behind to back it. It is like a whited sepulchre. Above all we must be true to ourselves, if we will be true to the country and lead it to its chosen goal. Let there be no cant about non-violence. It is not like a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being.

*Young India*, 12-8-1926

## 14

## MY ATTITUDE TOWARDS WAR

Rev. B. de Ligt has written in a French journal called *Evolution* a long open letter to me. He has favoured me with a translation of it. The open letter strongly criticizes my participation in the Boer War and then the Great War of 1914, and invites me to explain my conduct in the light of Ahimsa. Other friends too have put the same question. I have attempted to give the explanation more than once in these columns.

There is no defence for my conduct weighed only in the scales of Ahimsa. I draw no distinction between those who wield the weapons of destruction and those who do red cross work. Both participate in war and advance its cause. Both are guilty of the crime of war. But even after introspection during all these years, I feel that, in the circumstances in which I found myself, I was bound to adopt the course I did both during the Boer War and the Great European War and for that matter the so-called Zulu 'Rebellion' of Natal in 1906.

Life is governed by a multitude of forces. It would be smooth sailing, if one could determine the course of one's actions only by one general principle whose application at a given moment was too obvious to need even a moment's reflection. But I cannot recall a single act which could be so easily determined.

Being a confirmed war resister I have never given myself training in the use of destructive weapons in spite of opportunities to take such training. It was perhaps

thus that I escaped direct destruction of human life. But so long as I lived under a system of government based on force and voluntarily partook of the many facilities and privileges it created for me, I was bound to help that government to the extent of my ability when it was engaged in a war, unless I non-co-operated with that government and renounced to the utmost of my capacity the privileges it offered me.

Let me take an illustration. I am a member of an institution which holds a few acres of land whose crops are in imminent peril from monkeys. I believe in the sacredness of all life, and hence I regard it as breach of Ahimsa to inflict any injury on the monkeys. But I do not hesitate to instigate and direct an attack on the monkeys in order to save the crops. I would like to avoid this evil. I can avoid it by leaving or breaking up the institution. I do not do so because I do not expect to be able to find a society where there will be no agriculture and therefore no destruction of some life. In fear and trembling, in humility and penance, I therefore participate in the injury inflicted on the monkeys, hoping some day to find a way out.

Even so did I participate in the three acts of war. I could not, it would be madness for me to, sever my connection with the society to which I belong. And on those three occasions I had no thought of non-co-operating with the British Government. My position regarding that Government is totally different today, and hence I should not voluntarily participate in its war, and I should risk imprisonment and even the gallows, if I was forced to take up arms or otherwise take part in its military operations.

But that still does not solve the riddle. If there was a national Government, whilst I should not take any direct part in any war, I can conceive occasions when it would be my duty to vote for the military training of those who wish to take it. For I know that all its members do not believe in non-violence to the extent I do. It is not possible to make a person or a society non-violent by compulsion.

Non-violence works in a most mysterious manner. Often a man's actions defy analysis in terms of non-violence;

equally often his actions may wear the appearance of violence when he is absolutely non-violent in the highest sense of the term and is subsequently found so to be. All I can then claim for my conduct is that it was, in the instances cited, actuated in the interests of non-violence. There was no thought of sordid national or other interest. I do not believe in the promotion of national or any other interest at the sacrifice of some other interest.

I may not carry my argument any further. Language at best is but a poor vehicle for expressing one's thoughts in full. For me non-violence is not a mere philosophical principle. It is the rule and the breath of my life. I know I fail often, sometimes consciously, more often unconsciously. It is a matter not of the intellect but of the heart. True guidance comes by constant waiting upon God, by utmost humility, self-abnegation, by being ever ready to sacrifice one's self. Its practice requires fearlessness and courage of the highest order. I am painfully aware of my failings.

But the Light within me is steady and clear. There is no escape for any of us save through truth and non-violence. I know that war is wrong, is an unmitigated evil. I know too that it has got to go. I firmly believe that freedom won through bloodshed or fraud is no freedom. Would that all the acts alleged against me were found to be wholly indefensible rather than that by any act of mine non-violence was held to be compromised or that I was ever thought to be in favour of violence or untruth in any shape or form. Not violence, not untruth, but non-violence, Truth is the law of our being.

*Young India*, 13-9-1928



## SWORD v. SPIRIT

A friend sends the following interesting extract from an old number of *My Magazine*:

"No conqueror ever gained more by wars than did Napoleon, Emperor of the French, who, beginning as a poor Corsican Lieutenant, for a little while dominated Europe, altering boundaries, upsetting thrones. Yet Napoleon knew that it was folly to rely on force. 'There are only two powers in the world,' he said, not after he had been defeated and exiled, but while he appeared to be at the height of his success, 'those powers are the spirit and the sword. In the long run *the sword will always be conquered by the spirit.*'"

But why, we may ask, did Napoleon, if he saw so plainly the uselessness of war, continue to make war? Why did he use the sword until it was wrenched out of his hand at Waterloo? Partly because Napoleon, like the rest of us, could not always practise what he preached, but partly because other kings and emperors would not let him alone. They were not as wise as he. When he pleaded for peace they would not believe he was sincere. To the Emperor of Austria after a fierce battle he addressed this personal appeal :

'Thousands of Frenchmen and Austrians have been killed. The prospect of continuance of such horrors distresses me so greatly that I make a personal appeal to you. Amid grief and surrounded by 15,000 corpses, I implore Your Majesty, I feel bound to give you an urgent warning. You are far from the scene, your heart cannot be so deeply moved as mine is on the spot.

'Let us give our generation peace and tranquillity. If the men of the later days are such fools as to come to blows, they will learn wisdom after a few years of fighting and will then live at peace with one another.'"

Would that India, which through her Congress has subscribed to the policy of non-violence, will adhere to it and demonstrate to a world groaning under the curse of the sword that the spirit does triumph over the sword in national affairs as it has ever been shown to have triumphed in individual affairs.

*Young India*, 14-2-1929

## FOR CONSCIENCE' SAKE

*Pax International* is a monthly journal issued at Geneva, (12 rue de Vieux-College) on behalf of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. I have before me a copy of the November number of this monthly which has the following paragraph:

"In Jugoslavia 72 members of the religious body of Nazarenes have been condemned by the military court of the Save District to ten years' imprisonment for refusing to take up arms. All of the condemned have already served five years' imprisonment for the same offence. All friends of peace in the whole world should protest against these inhuman sentences and demand the revision of the sentence."

It is a remarkable awakening in the Western world, this peace movement. That ten years' servitude for the mere refusal to take up arms is possible under a system in respect of 72 honourable men who follow the law of love rather than the law of hate which the system promulgates, is proof of its barbarity. Whether the world conscience disapproves of these savage sentences or not and whether such disapproval produces an effect on the Jugoslavian Government or not, it is certain that the system must be at its last gasp that needs for its sustenance the infliction of barbarous sentences on innocent and honourable citizens. I tender my respectful congratulations to the brave Nazarenes whom, let me hope, the conscience of Jugoslavia itself will not allow to lie buried in its goals for ten long years.

*Young India*, 14-2-1929

## OUR CHOICE

An American correspondent has sent me a cutting from an old number of *The World Tomorrow* (August, 1928). It is a remarkable article on 'Pacifism and National Security' by John Nevin Sayre, which is worthy of perusal by every patriot. The following opening paragraphs show which way the writer would lead us:

"Pacifism, first of all, asks people to consider whether national armament can really conduce to security in a civilization which uses the tools of twentieth century science. No matter what may be said for defence by armament in the past, we believe that it is an utterly obsolete and extremely dangerous way of attempting to attain security now. In the world in which we live and in the decades immediately ahead, it is open to the double objection of (1) mounting cost, and (2) diminishing effectiveness of defence.

Within the span of forty years, that is, within the lifetime of many of my readers, the United States has increased the annual expenditure for its navy from 15 million to 318 million dollars. The last session of Congress passed appropriations which mean that, every time the hands of the clock traverse twenty-four hours, the United States spends 2,000,000 dollars for upkeep of the army and navy. A leading article in *The New York Times*, published in March 1927, was headed, 'War — Man's Greatest Industry'. The writer asserted that 'preparation to be ready for war constitutes what is actually the greatest industry in the world.'

There is also an increasing human cost not measurable in dollars. The machines of war have to be tended by men. The munitions of war have to be manufactured by men, and approach is being made more and more toward the drafting of industry and of whole populations for war service. Once wars were fought by professional armies which constituted but a relatively small part of any people; today military strategists plan to conscript the activity of the entire man power of a nation. A proposed French law gives power to the State to conscript also the women. Compulsory military training in time of peace and the invasion of schools and colleges by military departments run by the Department of War are requisitioning study time of youth, and tending to regiment

youth's thinking. The post office, the newspapers, the radio, the movies, artists, and men of science are in danger of being drawn in to give their support to the building of War's preparedness machine. All this means an increasing cost to human liberty, to freedom of thought and discussion, to the possibility of social advance. It should be fully weighed in estimating the price to be paid for putting over an 'adequate' security programme. Armed preparedness is a huge cost<sup>o</sup> in the present, and for the future it is mounting.

Even worse is the fact that increase of expenditure for armament does not in the modern world purchase increase of security. It may do so, possibly, for a score of years, but the policy is subject to a law of diminishing returns, and leads straight towards a climax of disaster. Senator Borah in discussing 'what is preparedness?' recently called attention to the huge public debts and constantly increasing tax burdens which governments are putting on their peoples throughout the world. 'The things with which governments will have to contend in the future,' he said, 'are the economic distress and political unrest of their own people.' 'A big armament programme,' he warns us, 'will be courting trouble.' It will widen the breach between the citizen and his Government. It will further discourage and exasperate those who already have more than they can bear. It will not be preparedness, for that which accentuates economic distress is unpreparedness."

The fashion nowadays is to take for granted that whatever America and England are doing is good enough for us. But the figures given by the writer of the cost to America of her armament are too terrible to contemplate. War has become a matter of money and resourcefulness in inventing weapons of destruction. It is no longer a matter of personal bravery or endurance. To compass the destruction of men, women and children, it might be enough for me to press a button and drop poison on them in a second.

Do we wish to copy this method of defending ourselves? Even if we do, have we the financial ability? We complain of ever-growing military expenditure. But if we would copy America or England, we would have to increase the burden tenfold.

Do we first want to copy the Western nations and then in the dim and distant future, after having gone



through the agony, retrace our steps? Or do we want to strike out an original path, or rather retain what to me is our own predominantly peaceful path and therethrough win and assert our freedom?

We are restrained from violence through our weakness. What is wanted is a deliberate giving up of violence out of strength. To be able to do this requires imagination coupled with a penetrating study of the world drift. Today the superficial glamour of the West dazzles us, and we mistake for progress the giddy dance which engages us from day to day. We refuse to see that it is surely leading us to death. Above all we must recognize that to compete with the Western nations on their terms is to court suicide. Whereas if we realize that notwithstanding the seeming supremacy of violence, it is the moral force that governs the universe, we should train for non-violence with the fullest faith in its limitless possibilities. If we are to be saved and are to make a substantial contribution to the world's progress, ours must emphatically and predominantly be the way of peace.

*Young India*, 22-8-1929

## 18

### MILITARY PROGRAMME

George Joseph has been one of my dearest comrades. When I was having rest in Yeravda, he was editor of *Young India*. Before that at my instance he was editor of the now defunct *Independent*. He had sacrificed a lucrative practice for the sake of the country. He went to gaol for the same cause. He is an earnest and honest worker. He is therefore entitled to a respectful hearing, the more so when such a man differs from you, and, rejecting the old, recommends with the fervour of a convert the adoption of a new policy.

He condemns Khadi, he is "quite satisfied that the removal of untouchability is not primarily a problem of statesmanship." His programme in one simple sentence is: 'Militarize India'. Here is an extract from the speech:

"We cannot all become soldiers. There is enough room for us. But it should be possible for us to set about the idea of training

about 5,000 men every year in this presidency in urban units. The men will go to drill two or three times a week, go out to camp three weeks in the year. Such training should be made available not only for the students who are at college, but also for men of sufficient social and educational status, the educational standard being the membership of the School Leaving class. If you see in every street such people going about in khaki, there will be a new element in our life. This kind of training would make people to stand straight, to think straight, and to speak straight. It will be a great enrichment of our life."

My experience teaches me differently. I have known men in khaki rolling in gutters instead of standing straight. I have seen a Dyer thinking crooked and speaking not straight but nonsense. I have known a commander-in-chief being unable to think at all, let alone thinking straight. Let those who are enamoured of military training have it by all means; but to suggest it 'as a new constructive programme' betrays impatience and hasty thinking. There is not much danger of 'the new programme' taking root in the Indian soil. Moreover, it is against the new order of things that is coming into being even in the West which has grown weary of the war-god. The military spirit in the West bids fair to kill the very humanity in men and reduce him to the level of the beast. What is wanted and what India has, thank God, learnt in a measure undreamt of before is the spirit of unarmed resistance before which the bayonet runs to rust and gunpowder turns to dust. The vision that Joseph puts before us of an armed government bending a minority to its will by a clatter of arms is a negation of the democratic spirit and progress. If that is the promise of the new programme, we have the armed coercion even now, not indeed of a mere minority but of an overwhelming majority. What we want, I hope, is a government not based on coercion even of a minority, but on its conversion. If it is a change from white military rule to a known one, we hardly need make any fuss. At any rate the masses then do not count. They will be subject to the same spoliation as now if not even worse. When George Joseph has lived down his impatience, I know him to be too honest not to retrace his steps and become the

fine democrat that, to my great joy, I had discovered him to be on the Madras beach in 1919.

Let us then turn to what he has to say about Khadi:

"As long as I was within the fold of the Congress, the only thing the constructive programme represented was khaddar, removal of untouchability, and in later years prohibition. Now I must frankly tell you that I have come deliberately to the conclusion that not one of these goes to the root of the fundamental need of this nation. Khaddar does not. I think it will not survive the creator of the movement, Gandhiji. I have come to that conclusion because of the fundamental economic defect which is attached to khaddar. It costs far too much to produce and to buy, and is, consequently, unjust to the consumer. Khaddar which costs about a rupee a yard will not stand against the cloth produced by the machine industries costing as. 6. My experience of khaddar is that it results in injustice to the producer also. The women, the spinners, who are at the root of khaddar, working for 10 hours a day, have got to be content with a wage of as. 3. I suggest that an industry based on the payment of as. 3 as wages to the fundamental producer thereof cannot succeed, because it amounts to sweating of labour. The sweating of labour consists essentially in paying to the labourer less than is sufficient for her physical maintenance. It is no answer to say that the country is stricken with famine, that there are millions of people without occupation, and to say that for these as. 3 is better than no income whatever. I refuse to accept that argument. That cannot be an argument which can appeal to any human employer of labour, or any statesman with a forward-looking view, in reference to the affairs of his country. It is no consolation to be told that I shall be right in offering as. 3 wages a day, when I know as a matter of economic necessity that the wages would not be sufficient to maintain the worker, much less her family. That is to my mind the hopeless, ineradicable and inexorable vice that attaches to khaddar. That is why today, in spite of 7 or 8 years of labour by Gandhiji, and in spite of lakhs of money poured like water into the organization of the industry, the production of khaddar is infinitely small compared to the magnitude of the problem that has got to be solved, that is to produce clothing for the whole of India, and to put an end to the importation of Rs. 60 crores worth of cloth every year."

Here George Joseph's impatience for reform has betrayed him into lapse of memory. For he brings no new

argument in support of his summary rejection of Khadi, but quotes as facts what he himself used to refute as fallacies. Arguments may be revised on further consideration, but facts may not be unless they are proved to have been false. Khadi as conceived for the use of millions does not cost more than foreign cloth for the simple reason that the millions must, if Khadi is to be used by them, be their own manufacturers and consumers. These pages have shown that in Bardoli, Bijolia and several other places Khadi is being so manufactured and consumed, even as in millions of homes people cook and eat their own food. It is possible to demonstrate, in terms of metal, that rice or bread cooked in a few factories would cost less than they cost today in the millions of homes. But nobody on that account would dare suggest that the millions should cease to cook and should send their raw rice and wheat to be cooked in centralized factories.

Again it is not true to say that women spinners work ten hours per day. Whatever spinning they do is done during their spare hours, and what they get is not a day's wage but in the majority of cases a substantial addition to their daily earnings from their daily avocation. The earning from spinning is waste turned into wealth and not the price of 'sweated labour' as Joseph puts it. And let me correct Joseph by saying that no spinner even working for 10 hours per day can earn 3 as. per day. Spinning has never been conceived as a full-day occupation. Lastly, it is untrue to say that "lakhs of money have been poured like water into the organization of the industry." No organization on a nationwide scale has been known to cost less in organizing than this has. What is true is that a paltry 25 lakhs have been invested as capital for organizing this great and daily growing cottage industry which brings water to thousands of parched lips. Joseph must think cheap of his countrymen when he prophesies that an organization which employs at least 1,500 willing workers in 1,500 villages, an organization which brings daily relief to nearly 1,50,000 women, an organization which commands the self-sacrificing labours of a Mithubai Petit,



the Naoroji Sisters, of a Banker, a Jamnalal, a Rajagopalachari, and Abbas Tyebji, a Venkatappayya, a Pattabhi, a Gangadharrao, a Vallabhbhai, a Lakshmidas, a Rajendraprasad, a Jairamdas, a Mahadev, a Kripalani, a Satish Chandra Dasgupta, a Suresh Banerji, aye a Jawaharlal, and a host of others, doctors, merchants and laymen too numerous to mention though known to fame, will die after the death of one man. It will be a tragic miracle, if all these men and women find the morning after my death that Khadi was a 'huge blunder'.

And the pity of it all is that Joseph does not suggest an alternative. Not even if every educated Indian was dressed in khaki and knew how to shoot straight, would the problem of growing poverty and the forced partial unemployment of millions of the peasantry be solved without a special programme devised for the purpose. For better or worse Khadi is that programme till a better is evolved.

*Young India*, 19-12-1929

## 19

### SUPERSTITIONS DIE HARD

Mr. Henry Eaton writes from California:

"In America many of us are sure that once Britain is out of India, Russia will step in. We cannot visualize the India of the present, the India with her caste system and her primitive methods of manufacture and agriculture, defending herself against Western invasion. You have no national organization for protection. There is no unity in India. Unity had been essential to the rise of Western culture and civilization. There also seems to be no progress, as we look on progress in the West, in India. You yourself advocate the return to the old methods of weaving. Have you, with your great intelligence, no realization of the inevitability of change, of moving forward?

You cannot go back from old age to childhood. How then can you go back from enlightened methods of weaving to unenlightened methods and hope to gain anything? While you work in the old way that is hard, you realize that there is a new way that is easy,

and you cannot be satisfied with the old hard way. You see how Japan had risen to power by adopting the new way and even China is awakening. India alone seems not to realize the importance of the new ways of the world. How is it that you, her great leader, do not preach progress to your people?"

This letter betrays two superstitions. One of them is that India is unfit to govern herself because she cannot defend herself and is torn with internal dissensions. The writer gratuitously assumes that, if Britain withdraws, Russia is ready to pounce upon India. This is an insult to Russia. Is Russia's one business to rule over those peoples who are not ruled by Britain? And if Russia has such nefarious designs upon India, does not the writer see that the same power that will oust the British from domination is bound to prevent any other domination?

Personally, I should rely more upon the capacity of the nation to offer civil resistance to any aggressor as it did last year with partial success in the case of the British occupier. Complete success awaits complete assimilation of non-violence in thought, word and deed by the nation. An ocular demonstration of the success of nation-wide Satyagraha must be a prelude to its world-wide acceptance and hence as a natural corollary to the admission of the futility of armament. The only antidote to armament, which is the visible symbol of violence is Satyagraha, the visible symbol of non-violence. But the writer is oppressed also by the fear of our dissensions. In the first place, they are grossly exaggerated in transmission to the West. In the second place, they are hardened during foreign control. Imperial rule means *divide et impera*. They must, therefore, melt with the withdrawal of the frigid foreign rule and the introduction of the warmth-giving sunshine of real freedom.

Lastly, I do not subscribe to the belief that everything old is bad. Truth is old and difficult. Untruth has many attractions. But I would gladly go back to the very old Golden Age of Truth. Good old brown bread is any day superior to the pasty white bread which has lost much of its nutritive value in going through the various processes of refinement. The list of old and yet good things

can be endlessly multiplied. The spinning wheel is one such thing, at any rate for India.

When India becomes self-supporting, self-reliant, and proof against temptations and exploitation, she will cease to be the object of greedy attraction for any power in the West or the East and will then feel secure without having to carry the burden of expensive armament. Her internal economy will be India's strongest bulwark against aggression.

*Young India*, 2-7-1931

20

## THEORY AND PRACTICE OF NON-VIOLENCE

The bulk of the questions asked at these meetings centred naturally round non-violence, and I (M. D.) summarize them here, including therein some of the questions and answers at the Paris meeting.

By way of introduction I shall give his (Gandhiji's) distinction between the methods of violence and non-violence: "In the method we are adopting in India, fraud, lying, deceit, and all the ugly brood of violence and untruth have absolutely no room. Everything is done openly and above board, for Truth hates secrecy. The more open you are the more truthful you are likely to be. There is no such things as defeat or despair in the dictionary of a man who bases his life on Truth and Non-violence. And yet the method of non-violence is not in any shape or form a passive or inactive method. It is essentially an active movement, much more active than the one involving the use of sanguinary weapons. Truth and Non-violence are perhaps the activist forces you have in the world. A man who wields sanguinary weapons and is intent upon destroying those whom he considers his enemies, does at least require some rest, and has to lay down his arms for a while in every twenty-four hours. He is, therefore, essentially inactive, for a certain part of the day. Not so the votary of Truth and Non-violence, for the simple reason that they are not external weapons. They reside in the human

breast, and they are actively working their way whether you are awake or whether you are asleep, whether you are walking leisurely or playing an active game. The panoplied warrior of Truth and Non-violence is ever and incessantly active."

How then can one be effectively non-violent? By simply refusing to take up arms? Einstein had made the call to the people not to take part in war. Was that enough? Questions which were raised again and again at various meetings and answered in a language inspired by the audience and the occasion.

About Einstein's call he said with a humour which no one could have mistaken: "My answer can be only one that, if Europe can take up the method enthusiastically, nothing could be better. Indeed, if I may say so about a great man, I would say that Einstein has stolen the method from me. But, if you want me to elaborate the thing, I would say that merely to refuse military service is not enough. To refuse to render military service when the particular time arrives is to do the thing after all the time for combating the evil is practically gone. Military service is only a symptom of the disease which is deeper. I suggest to you that those who are not on the register of military service are equally participating in the crime if they support the State otherwise. He or she who supports a State organized in the military way — whether directly or indirectly — participates in the sin. Each man, old or young, takes part in the sin by contributing to the maintenance of the State by paying the taxes. That is why I said to myself during the war that, so long as I ate wheat supported by the army whilst I was doing everything short of being a soldier, it was best for me to enlist in the army and be shot; otherwise I should retire to mountains and eat food grown by nature. Therefore all those who want to stop military service can do so by withdrawing all co-operation. Refusal of military service is much more superficial than non-co-operation with the whole system which supports the State. But then one's opposition becomes so swift and so effective that you run the risk of not only being marched to jail, but of being thrown into the streets."



Then may not one accept the non-military services of the State? The statement of the position had moved Pierre Ceresole deeply, and he asked this question in a way which was most touching. "We represent our truth, you represent *the* truth. The argument is often being advanced here, and we should like to be enlightened by you."

"Now," said Gandhiji, "you have touched the tenderest spot in human nature. I was faced with the very question as author of the non-co-operation movement. I said to myself, there is no State either run by Nero or Mussolini which has not good points about it, but we have to reject the whole, once we decide to non-co-operate with the system. There are in our country grand public roads and palatial educational institutions, said I to myself, but they are part of a system which crushes the nation. I should not have anything to do with them. They are like the fabled snake with a brilliant jewel on its head, but which has fangs full of poison. So I came to the conclusion that the British rule in India had crushed the spirit of the nation and stunted its growth, and so I decided to deny myself all the privileges—services, courts, titles. The policy would vary with different countries, but sacrifice and self-denial are the essential points. What Einstein has said would occur only once a year and only with very few people. But I suggest it as your first duty to non-co-operate with the State."

But is there not a deep difference between an independent nation and a subject nation? India may have a fundamental quarrel with an alien government, but how can the Swiss quarrel with the State?

"Difference there undoubtedly is," said Gandhiji. "As a member of a subject nation I could best help by shaking rid of my subjection. But here I am asked as to how best to get out of a military mentality. You are enjoying the amenities on condition that you render military service to the State. There you have to get State rid of the military mentality."

But Pierre Ceresole still had his doubts. The argument had irresistible appeal for him; but how did his own particular mission fit in, if he was to pursue the method

to its extreme logical conclusions? A question was asked at the great meeting in Geneva about Gandhiji's opinion regarding the work of the International Red Cross Society organized in Switzerland and the thousands of lives of prisoners that it had saved, and Gandhiji's answer to the question contained for Pierre Ceresole the solution of all his difficulties and a message of cheer for the International Service that he had organized. "I am ashamed to have to own that I do not know the history of this wonderful and magnificent organization. If it has saved prisoners by the thousands, my head bows before it. But having paid this tribute, may I say that this organization should cease to think of giving relief after the war but think of giving relief *without* the war? If war had no redeeming feature, no courage and heroism behind it, it would be a despicable thing, and would not need speeches to destroy it. But what I would suggest to you is infinitely nobler than war in all its branches including Red Cross organization. Believe me there are many more million prisoners slaves of their passions and conditions of life, and believe me that there are millions wounded by their own folly, and millions of wrecked homes on the face of the earth. The peace societies of tomorrow would, therefore, have enough work cut out for them when they take up international service, and may Switzerland give the lead to the world in this great task."

In answer to a similar question at another meeting he said: "Non-co-operation in military service and service in non-military matters are not compatible. 'Definitely' military service is an ill-chosen word. You are all the while giving military service by deputy because you are supporting a State which is based on military service. In Transvaal and other countries some are debarred from military service, but they have to pay money to the State. You will have to extend the scope of non-co-operation to your taxes. There is no limit to extending our service to our neighbours across our State-made frontiers. God never made those frontiers."

Q. Since disarmament chiefly depends on great powers, why should Switzerland, which is a small State and a

neutral State, be asked to disarm itself?

A. It is from the neutral ground of your country that I am speaking to all other powers and not only to Switzerland. If you won't carry this message to other parts of Europe, I shall be absolved from all blame. And seeing that Switzerland is a neutral territory and a non-aggressive nation, there is all the more reason why Switzerland should not need an army. Secondly, it is through your hospitality and by reason of your occupying the vantage ground that you have all nationals coming to you. It should be possible for you to give to the world a lesson in disarmament and show that you are brave enough to do without an army.

Q. How could a disarmed neutral country allow other nations to be destroyed? But for our army which was waiting ready at our frontier during the last war we should have been ruined.

A. At the risk of being considered a visionary or a fool I must answer this question in the only manner I know. It would be cowardly of a neutral country to allow an army to devastate a neighbouring country. But there are two ways in common between soldiers of war and soldiers of non-violence, and if I had been a citizen of Switzerland and a President of the Federal State, what I would have done would be to refuse passage to the invading army by refusing all supplies. Secondly, by re-enacting a Thermopylae in Switzerland, you would have presented a living wall of men and women and children, and inviting the invaders to walk over your corpses. You may say that such a thing is beyond human experience and endurance. I say that it is not so. It was quite possible. Last year in Gujarat women stood *lathi* charges unflinchingly, and in Peshawar thousands stood hails of bullets without resorting to violence. Imagine these men and women staying in front of an army requiring a safe passage to another country. The army would be brutal enough to walk over them, you might say. I would then say, you will still have done your duty by allowing yourself to be annihilated. An army that dares to pass over the corpses of innocent men and women would not be able to repeat that experiment. You

may, if you wish, refuse to believe in such courage on the part of the masses of men and women, but then you would have to admit that non-violence is made of sterner stuff. It was never conceived as a weapon of the weak, but of the stoutest hearts.

*Q.* Is it open to a soldier to fire in the air and avoid violence?

*A.* A soldier, who having enlisted himself flattered himself that he was avoiding violence by shooting in the air, did no credit to his courage or to his creed of non-violence. In my scheme of things such a man would be held to be guilty of untruth and cowardice both—cowardice in that in order to escape punishment he enlisted, and untruth in that he enlisted to serve as soldier and did not fire as expected. Such a thing discredits the cause of waging war against war. The war-resisters have to be like Caesar's wife—above suspicion. Their strength lies in absolute adherence to the morality of the question.

*Young India*, 31-12-1931

M. D.

## 21

### THE GREATEST FORCE

Three concrete questions were, the other day, incidentally asked by friends:

1. What could ill-armed Abyssinia do against well-armed Italy, if she were non-violent?

2. What could England, the greatest and the most powerful member of the League, do against determined Italy, if she (England) were non-violent in your sense of the term?

3. What could India do, if she suddenly became non-violent in your sense of the term?

Before I answer the questions let me lay down five simple axioms of non-violence as I know it:

(a) Non-violence implies as complete self-purification as is humanly possible.

(b) Man for man the strength of non-violence is in exact proportion to the ability, not the will, of the non-violent person to inflict violence.



(c) Non-violence is without exception superior to violence, i. e. the power at the disposal of a non-violent person is always greater than he would have if he was violent.

(d) There is no such thing as defeat in non-violence. The end of violence is surest defeat.

(e) The ultimate end of non-violence is surest victory — if such a term may be used of non-violence. In reality, where there is no sense of defeat, there is no sense of victory.

The foregoing questions may be answered in the light of these axioms.

1. If Abyssinia were non-violent, she would have no arms, would want none. She would make no appeal to the League or any other power for armed intervention. She would never give any cause for complaint. And Italy would find nothing to conquer if Abyssinians would not offer armed resistance, nor would they give co-operation, willing or forced. Italian occupation in that case would mean that of the land without its people. That, however, is not Italy's exact object. She seeks submission of the people of that beautiful land.

2. If Englishmen were as a nation to become non-violent at heart, they would shed imperialism, they would give up the use of arms. The moral force generated by such an act of renunciation would stagger Italy into willing surrender of her designs. England would then be a living embodiment of the axioms I have laid down. The effect of such conversion would mean the greatest miracle of all ages. And yet if non-violence is not an idle dream, some such thing has some day to come to pass somewhere. I live in that faith.

3. The last question may be answered thus. As I have said India as a nation is not non-violent in the full sense of the term. Neither has she any capacity for offering violence, not because she has no arms. Physical possession of arms is the least necessity of the brave. Her non-violence is that of the weak; she betrays her weakness in many of her daily acts. She appears before the world today as a decaying nation. I mean here not in the mere political sense but essentially in the non-violent, moral sense. She lacks

the ability to offer physical resistance. She has no consciousness of strength. She is conscious only of her weakness. If she were otherwise, there would be no communal problems, nor political. If she were non-violent in the consciousness of her strength, Englishmen would lose their role of distrustful conquerors.

*Harijan*, 12-10-1935

## 22

## A TALK ON NON-VIOLENCE

Now the talk centred on a discussion which was the main thing that had drawn the distinguished members to Gandhiji.

"Is non-violence from your point of view a form of direct action?" inquired Dr. Thurman. "It is not one form, it is the only form," said Gandhiji. "I do not of course confine the words 'direct action' to their technical meaning. But without a direct active expression of it, non-violence to my mind is meaningless. It is the greatest and the activist force in the world. One cannot be passively non-violent. Ahimsa means 'love' in the Pauline sense, and yet some thing more than the 'love' defined by St. Paul, although I know St. Paul's beautiful definition is good enough for all practical purposes. Ahimsa includes the whole creation, and not only human. One person who can express Ahimsa in life exercises a force superior to all the forces of brutality.

*Q.* And is it possible for any individual to achieve this?

Gandhiji: Certainly. If there was any exclusiveness about it, I should reject it at once.

*Q.* Is any idea of possession foreign to it?

Gandhiji: Yes. It possesses nothing, therefore it possesses everything.

*Q.* Is it possible for a single human being to resist the persistent invasion of the quality successfully?

Gandhiji: It is possible. Perhaps your question is more universal than you mean. Isn't it possible, you mean

to ask, for one single Indian, for instance, to resist the exploitation of 300 million Indians? Or do you mean the onslaught of the whole world against a single individual personally?

Dr. Thurman: Yes, that is one half of the question. I wanted to know if one man can hold the whole violence at bay.

Gandhiji: If he cannot, you must take it that he is not a true representative of Ahimsa. Supposing I cannot produce a single instance in life of a man who truly converted his adversary, I would then say that it is because no one had yet been found to express Ahimsa in its fulness.

Q. Then it overrides all other forces?

Gandhiji: Yes, it is the only true force in life.

"Forgive now the weakness of this question," said Dr. Thurman, who was absolutely absorbed in the discussion. "Forgive the weakness, but may I ask how are we to train individuals or communities in this difficult art?"

Gandhiji: There is no royal road, except through living the creed in your life which must be a living sermon. Of course, the expression in one's own life presupposes great study, tremendous perseverance, and thorough cleaning of one's self of all the impurities. If for mastering of the physical sciences you have to devote a whole lifetime, how many lifetimes may be needed for mastering the greatest spiritual force that mankind has known? But why worry even if it means several lifetimes? For, if this is the only permanent thing in life, if this is the only thing that counts, then whatever effort you bestow on mastering it is well spent. Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and everything else shall be added unto you. The Kingdom of Heaven is Ahimsa.

Mrs. Thurman had restrained herself until now. But she could not go away without asking the question with which, she knew, she would be confronted any day. "How am I to act, supposing my own brother was lynched before my very eyes?"

"There is such a thing as self-immolation," said Gandhiji. "Supposing I was a Negro, and my sister was ravished by a White or lynched by a whole community, what would be my duty? — I ask myself. And the answer

comes to me: I must not wish ill to these, but neither must I co-operate with them. It may be that ordinarily I depend on the lynching community for my livelihood. I refuse to co-operate with them, refuse even to touch the food that comes from them, and I refuse to co-operate with even my brother Negroes who tolerate the wrong. That is the self-immolation I mean. I have often in my life resorted to the plan. Of course a mechanical act of starvation will mean nothing. One's faith must remain undimmed whilst life ebbs out minute by minute. But I am a very poor specimen of the practice of non-violence, and my answer may not convince you. But I am striving very hard, and even if I do not succeed fully in this life, my faith will not diminish."

*Harijan*, 14-3-1936

## 23

## A DISCOURSE ON NON-VIOLENCE

**Negro's the Same Problem**

Readers of *Harijan* will perhaps remember how the central topic of the members of the Negro delegation who saw Gandhiji about a year ago was non-violence. Two Negro gentlemen, who came for the recent world's meeting of the committees of the Y. M. C. A., also had the same question to discuss, which shows how remarkably similar are their problems to ours: I am going to take up Dr. Tobias' questions first, though he saw Gandhiji later and on his day of silence. For the long discourse with Prof. Mays was a kind of commentary on the brief replies given in writing to Dr. Tobias, and both together make up one of the interesting talks Gandhiji often gives on the subject of non-violence.

"Your doctrine of non-violence has profoundly influenced my life," said Dr. Tobias. "Do you believe in it as strongly as ever?"

"I do indeed," said Gandhiji. "My faith in it is growing."



"Negroes in U. S. A. — 12 million — are struggling to obtain such fundamental rights as freedom from mob-violence, unrestricted use of the ballot, freedom from segregation, etc. Have you, out of your struggle in India, a word of advice and encouragement to give us?"

"I had to contend against some such thing, though on a much smaller scale, in South Africa. The difficulties are not yet over. All I can say is that there is no other way than the way of non-violence — a way, however, not of the weak and ignorant but of the strong and wise."

"Travancore indicates that your full identification with the untouchables is bearing fruit. Do you think Travancore's example will be followed by other States in the near future?"

"I shall be surprised if it is not."

"What word shall I give to my Negro brethren as to the outlook for the future?"

"With right which is on their side and the choice of non-violence as their only weapon, if they will make it such, a bright future is assured."

### A Misnomer

"Passive resistance," said Gandhiji, "is a misnomer for non-violent resistance. It is much more active than violent resistance. It is direct, ceaseless, but three-fourths invisible and only one-fourth visible. In its visibility it seems to be ineffective, e. g. the spinning wheel which I have called the symbol of non-violence. In its visibility it appears ineffective, but it is really intensely active and most effective in ultimate result. This knowledge enables me to detect flaws in the way in which the votaries of non-violence are doing their spinning. I ask for more vigilance and more untiredness. Non-violence is an intensely active force when properly understood and used. A violent man's activity is most visible, while it lasts. But it is always transitory. What can be more visible than the Abyssinians done to death by Italians? There it was lesser violence pitted against much greater. But if the Abyssinians had retired from the field and allowed themselves to be slaughtered, their seeming inactivity would have been much more effective though

not for the moment visible. Hitler and Mussolini on the one hand and Stalin on the other are able to show the immediate effectiveness of violence. But it will be as transitory as that of Chinghis' slaughter. But the effects of Buddha's non-violent action persist and are likely to grow with age. And the more it is practised, the more effective and inexhaustible it becomes, and ultimately the whole world stands agape and exclaims, 'a miracle has happened.' All miracles are due to the silent and effective working of invisible forces. Non-violence is the most invisible and the most effective."

### **Can Masses be Trained?**

"I have no doubt in my mind about the superiority of non-violence," said Prof. Mays. "But the thing that bothers me is about its exercise on a large scale, the difficulty of so disciplining the mass mind on the point of love. It is easier to discipline individuals. What should be the strategy when they break out? Do we retreat or do we go on?"

"I have had that experience," said Gandhiji, "in the course of our movement here. People do not gain the training by preaching. Non-violence cannot be preached. It has to be practised. The practice of violence can be taught to people by outward symbols. You shoot at boards, then at targets, then at beasts. Then you are passed as an expert in the art of destruction. The non-violent man has no outward weapon and, therefore, not only his speech but his action also seems ineffective. I may say all kinds of sweet words to you without meaning them. On the other hand I may have real love in me and yet my outward expression may be forbidding. Then outwardly my action in both cases may be the same and yet the effect may be different. For the effect of our action is often more potent when it is not patently known. Thus the unconscious effect you are making on me I may never know. It is, nevertheless, infinitely greater than the conscious effect. In violence there is nothing invisible. Non-violence, on the other hand, is three-fourths invisible, and so the effect is in the inverse ratio to its invisibility. Non-violence, when

it becomes active, travels with extraordinary velocity, and then it becomes a miracle. So the mass mind is affected first unconsciously, then consciously. When it becomes consciously affected there is demonstrable victory. In my own experience, when people seemed to be weakening there was no consciousness of defeat in me. Thus I was fuller of hope in the efficacy of non-violence after the renunciation of civil disobedience in 1922, and today I continue to be in the same hopeful mood. It is not a mere emotional thing. Supposing I saw no signs of dawn coming, I should not lose faith. Everything has to come in its proper time.

"I have discussions here with my co-workers about the scavenging work we are doing. 'Why can't we do it after Swaraj?' they say. 'We may do it better after Swaraj.' I say to them, 'No. The reform has to come today, it must not wait for Swaraj; in fact the right type of Swaraj will come only out of such work.' Now I cannot show you, as perhaps I cannot show some of my co-workers, the connection between Swaraj and scavenging. If I have to win Swaraj non-violently, I must discipline my people. The maimed and the blind and the leprous cannot join the army of violence. There is also an age-limit for serving in the army. For a non-violent struggle there is no age-limit; the blind and the maimed and the bed-ridden may serve, and not only men but women also. When the spirit of non-violence pervades the people and actually begins to work, its effect is visible to all.

"But now comes your poser. There are people, you say, who do not believe in non-violence as you do. Are you to sit quiet? The friends ask: 'If not now, when will you act?' I say in reply: 'I may not succeed in my lifetime, but my faith that victory can only come through non-violence is stronger than ever. When I spoke on the cult of the spinning wheel at Faizpur, a newspaper correspondent imputed astuteness to me. Nothing could be farther from my mind. When I came to Sevagram I was told the people might not co-operate and might even boycott me. I said: 'That may be. But this is the way non-violence works. If I go to a village which is still farther off, the experiment may work better. This thing has come in

my search after the technique of non-violence. And each day that passes makes my faith brighter. I have come here to bring that faith to fruition and to die in the process if that is God's will. Non-violence to be worth anything has to work in the face of hostile forces. But there may be action in inaction. And action may be worse than inaction."

### **Violence in a Spirit of Love?**

"Is it ever possible to administer violence in a spirit of love?"

"No. Never. I shall give you an illustration from my own experiment. A calf was lame and had developed terrible sores; he could not eat and breathed with difficulty. After three days' argument with myself and my co-workers I put an end to its life. Now that action was non-violent because it was wholly unselfish, inasmuch as the sole purpose was to achieve the calf's relief from pain. Some people have called this an act of violence. I have called it a surgical operation. I should do exactly the same thing with my child, if he were in the same predicament. My point is that non-violence as the supreme law of our being ceases to be such the moment you talk of exceptions."

"How is a minority to act against an overwhelming majority?" asked Prof. Mays.

"I would say that a minority can do much more in the way of non-violence than a majority. I had an English friend called Symonds. He used to say: 'I am with you so long as you are in a minority. After you are in a majority we are quits.' I had less diffidence in handling my minority in South Africa than I had here in handling a majority. But it would be wholly wrong for that reason to say that non-violence is a weapon of the weak.... The use of non-violence requires greater bravery than that of violence. When Daniel defied the laws of the Meads and Persians, his action was non-violent."

### **Consequences to the Enemy**

"Should the thought of consequences that might accrue to the enemy as a result of your non-violence at all constrain you?"



"Certainly. You may have to suspend your movement as I did in South Africa when the Government was faced with the revolt of European labour. The latter asked me to make common cause with them. I said 'no'."

"And non-violence will never rebound on you, whereas violence will be self-destroyed?" interposed the Professor.

"Yes. Violence must beget violence. But let me tell you that here too my argument has been countered by a great man who said: 'Look at the history of non-violence. Jesus dies on the cross, but his followers shed blood.' This proves nothing. We have no data before us to pass judgment. We do not know the whole of the life of Jesus. The followers perhaps had not imbibed fully the message of non-violence. But I must warn you against carrying the impression with you that mine is the final word on non-violence. I know my own limitations. I am but a humble seeker after truth. And all I claim is that every experiment of mine has deepened my faith in non-violence as the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. Its use is not restricted to individuals merely, but it can be practised on a mass scale."

*Harijan*, 20-3-1937

M. D.

## 24

### OUR FAILURE

It is my conviction that the phenomenal growth of Congress is due to its acceptance and enforcement, however imperfect, of the policy of non-violence. Time has arrived to consider the nature of Congress non-violence. Is it non-violence of the weak and the helpless, or of the strong and the powerful? If it is the former, it will never take us to our goal and, if long practised, may even render us for ever unfit for self-government. The weak and helpless are non-violent in action because they must be. But in reality they harbour violence in their breasts and simply await opportunity for its display. It is necessary for Congressmen individually and collectively to examine the quality of their non-violence. If it does not come out of real strength,

it would be best and honest for the Congress to make such a declaration and make the necessary changes in its behaviour.

By this time, i. e. after seventeen years' practice of non-violence, the Congress should be able to put forth non-violent army of volunteers numbering not a few thousands but lakhs who would be equal to every occasion where the police and the military are required. Thus, instead of one brave Pashupatinath Gupta who died in the attempt to secure peace,\* we should be able to produce hundreds. And a non-violent army acts unlike armed men, as well in times of peace as of disturbances. They would be constantly engaged in constructive activities that make riots impossible. Theirs will be the duty of seeking occasions for bringing warring communities together, carrying on peace propaganda, engaging in activities that would bring and keep them in touch with every single person, male and female, adult and child, in their parish or division. Such an army should be ready to cope with any emergency, and in order to still the frenzy of mobs should risk their lives in numbers sufficient for the purpose. A few hundred, may be a few thousand, such spotless deaths will once for all put an end to the riots. Surely a few hundred young men and women giving themselves deliberately to mob fury will be any day a cheap and braver method of dealing with such madness than the display and use of the police and the military.

It has been suggested that when we have our independence riots and the like will not occur. This seems to me to be an empty hope, if in the course of the struggle for freedom we do not understand and use the technique of non-violent action in every conceivable circumstance. To the extent that the Congress ministers have been obliged to make use of the police and the military, to that extent, in my opinion, we must admit our failure. That the ministers could not have done otherwise is unfortunately only too true. I should like every Congressman, I should

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\* Later on a correction appeared in the *Harijan*, that though Shri Gupta was seriously injured, he did not die.—Ed.

like the Working Committee, to ask themselves why we have failed, if they think with me that we have.

*Harijan*, 26-3-1938

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## QUALIFICATIONS OF A PEACE BRIGADE

Some time ago I suggested the formation of a peace brigade whose members would risk their lives in dealing with riots, especially communal. The idea was that this brigade should substitute the police and even the military. This reads ambitious. The achievement may prove impossible. Yet, if the Congress is to succeed in its non-violent struggle, it must develop the power to deal peacefully with such situations.

Let us, therefore, see what qualifications a member of the contemplated peace brigade should possess.

1. He or she must have a living faith in non-violence. This is impossible without a living faith in God. A non-violent man can do nothing save by the power and grace of God. Without it he won't have the courage to die without anger, without fear and without retaliation. Such courage comes from the belief that God sits in the hearts of all, and that there should be no fear in the presence of God. The knowledge of the omnipresence of God also means respect for the lives of even those who may be called opponents or goondas. This contemplated intervention is a process of stilling the fury of man when the brute in him gets the mastery over him.

2. This messenger of peace must have equal regard for all the principal religions of the earth. Thus, if he is a Hindu, he will respect the other faiths current in India. He must, therefore, possess a knowledge of the general principles of the different faiths professed in the country.

3. Generally speaking this work of peace can only be done by local men in their own localities.

4. The work can be done singly or in groups. Therefore no one need wait for companions. Nevertheless one

would naturally seek companions in one's own locality and form a local brigade.

5. This messenger of peace will cultivate, through personal service, contacts with the people in his locality or chosen circle, so that when he appears to deal with ugly situations, he does not descend upon the members of a riotous assembly as an utter stranger liable to be looked upon as a suspect or an unwelcome visitor.

6. Needless to say, a peace-bringer must have a character beyond reproach and must be known for his strict impartiality.

7. Generally there are previous warnings of coming storms. If these are known, the peace brigade will not wait till the conflagration breaks out, but will try to handle the situation in anticipation.

8. Whilst, if the movement spreads, it might be well if there are some whole-time workers, it is not absolutely necessary that there should be. The idea is to have as many good and true men and women as possible. These can be had only if volunteers are drawn from those who are engaged in various walks of life but have leisure enough to cultivate friendly relations with the people living in their circle and otherwise possess the qualifications required of a member of the peace brigade.

9. There should be a distinctive dress worn by the members of the contemplated brigade so that in course of time they will be recognized without the slightest difficulty.

These are but general suggestions. Each centre can work out its own constitution on the basis here suggested.

*Harijan*, 18-6-1938



## IF I WERE A CZECH

If I have called the arrangement with Herr Hitler 'peace without honour', it was not to cast any reflection on British or French statesmen. I have no doubt that Mr. Chamberlain could not think of anything better. He knew his nation's limitations. He wanted to avoid war, if it could be avoided at all. Short of going to war, he pulled his full weight in favour of the Czechs. That it could not save honour was no fault of his. It would be so every time there is a struggle with Herr Hitler or Signor Mussolini.

It cannot be otherwise. Democracy dreads to spill blood. The philosophy for which the two dictators stand calls it cowardice to shrink from carnage. They exhaust the resources of poetic art in order to glorify organized murder. There is no humbug about their word or deed. They are ever ready for war. There is nobody in Germany or Italy to cross their path. Their word is law.

It is different with Mr. Chamberlain or M. Daladier. They have their Parliaments and Chambers to please. They have parties to confer with. They cannot maintain themselves on a perpetual war footing, if their language is to have a democratic accent about it.

Science of war leads one to dictatorship pure and simple. Science of non-violence can alone lead one to pure democracy. England, France and America have to make their choice. That is the challenge of the two dictators.

Russia is out of the picture just now. Russia has a dictator who dreams of peace and thinks he will wade to it through a sea of blood. No one can say what Russian dictatorship will mean to the world.

It was necessary to give this introduction to what I want to say to the Czechs and through them to all those nationalities which are called 'small' or 'weak'. I want to speak to the Czechs because their plight moved me to the point of physical and mental distress, and I felt that it would be cowardice on my part not to share

with them the thoughts that were welling up within me. It is clear that the small nations must either come or be ready to come under the protection of the dictators or be a constant menace to the peace of Europe. In spite of all the goodwill in the world England and France cannot save them. Their intervention can only mean bloodshed and destruction such as has never been seen before. If I were a Cze<sup>ch</sup>, therefore, I would free these two nations from the obligation to defend my country. And yet I must live. I would not be a vassal to any nation or body. I must have absolute independence or perish. To seek to win in a clash of arms would be pure bravado. Not so, if in defying the might of one who would deprive me of my independence I refuse to obey his will and perish unarmed in the attempt. In so doing, though I lose the body, I save my soul, i.e. my honour.

This inglorious peace should be my opportunity. I must live down the humiliation and gain real independence.

But says a comforter, "Hitler knows no pity. Your spiritual effort will avail nothing before him."

My answer is: "You may be right. History has no record of a nation having adopted non-violent resistance. If Hitler is unaffected by my suffering, it does not matter. For I shall have lost nothing worth. My honour is the only thing worth preserving. That is independent of Hitler's pity. But as a believer in non-violence I may not limit its possibilities. Hitherto he and his likes have built upon their invariable experience that men yield to force. Unarmed men, women and children offering non-violent resistance without any bitterness in them will be a novel experience for them. Who can dare say it is not in their nature to respond to the higher and finer forces? They have the same soul that I have."

This is how I should, I believe, act if I was a Czech. When I first launched out on Satyagraha, I had no companion. We were 13,000 men, women and children against a whole nation capable of crushing the existence out of us. I did not know who would listen to me. It all came as in a flash. All the 13,000 did not fight. Many fell back.

But the honour of the nation was saved. New history was written by the South African Satyagraha.

A more apposite instance, perhaps, is that of Khansaheb Abdul Gaffar Khan, the servant of God as he calls himself, the pride of Afghan as the Pathans delight to call him. He is sitting in front of me as I pen these lines. He has made several thousands of his people throw down their arms. He thinks he has imbibed the lesson of non-violence. He is not sure of his people. I have come to the Frontier Province, or rather he has brought me, to see with my own eyes what his men here are doing. I can say in advance and at once that these men know very little of non-violence. All the treasure they have on earth is their faith in their leader. I do not cite these soldiers of peace as at all a finished illustration. I cite them as an honest attempt being made by a soldier to convert fellow soldiers to the ways of peace. I can testify that it is an honest attempt, and whether in the end it succeeds or fails, it will have its lessons for Satyagrahis of the future. My purpose will be fulfilled, if I succeed in reaching these men's hearts and making them see that, if their non-violence does not make them feel much braver than the possession of arms and the ability to use them, they must give up their non-violence, which is another name for cowardice, and resume their arms which there is nothing but their own will to prevent them from taking back.

I present Dr. Benes with a weapon not of the weak but of the brave. There is no bravery greater than a resolute refusal to bend the knee to an earthly power, no matter how great, and that without bitterness of spirit in the fullness of faith that the spirit alone lives, nothing else does.

Peshawar, 6-10-'38

*Harijan*, 15-10-1938

## THE JEWS

Several letters have been received by me asking me to declare my views about the Arab-Jew question in Palestine and the persecution of the Jews in Germany. It is not without hesitation that I venture to offer my views on this very difficult question.

My sympathies are all with the Jews. I have known them intimately in South Africa. Some of them became lifelong companions. Through these friends I came to learn much of their agelong persecution. They have been the untouchables of Christianity. The parallel between their treatment by Christians and the treatment of untouchables by Hindus is very close. Religious sanction has been invoked in both cases for the justification of the inhuman treatment meted out to them. Apart from the friendships, therefore, there is the more common universal reason for my sympathy for the Jews.

But my sympathy does not blind me to the requirements of justice. The cry for the national home for the Jews does not make much appeal to me. The sanction for it is sought in the Bible and the tenacity with which the Jews have hankered after return to Palestine. Why should they not, like other peoples of the earth, make that country their home where they are born and where they earn their livelihood?

Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs. What is going on in Palestine today cannot be justified by any moral code of conduct. The mandates have no sanction but that of the last war. Surely it would be a crime against humanity to reduce the proud Arabs so that Palestine can be restored to the Jews partly or wholly as their national home.

The nobler course would be to insist on a just treatment of the Jews wherever they are born and bred. The



Jews born in France are French in precisely the same sense that Christians born in France are French. If the Jews have no home but Palestine, will they relish the idea of being forced to leave the other parts of the world in which they are settled? Or do they want a double home where they can remain at will? This cry for the national home affords a colourable justification for the German expulsion of the Jews.

But the German persecution of the Jews seems to have no parallel in history. The tyrants of old never went so mad as Hitler seems to have gone. And he is doing it with religious zeal. For, he is propounding a new religion of exclusive and militant nationalism in the name of which any inhumanity becomes an act of humanity to be rewarded here and hereafter. The crime of an obviously mad but intrepid youth is being visited upon his whole race with unbelievable ferocity. If there ever could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, a war against Germany to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race, would be completely justified. But I do not believe in any war. A discussion of the pros and cons of such a war is, therefore, outside my horizon or province.

But if there can be no war against Germany, even for such a crime as is being committed against the Jews, surely there can be no alliance with Germany. How can there be alliance between a nation which claims to stand for justice and democracy and one which is the declared enemy of both? Or is England drifting towards armed dictatorship and all it means?

Germany is showing to the world how efficiently violence can be worked when it is not hampered by any hypocrisy or weakness masquerading as humanitarianism. It is also showing how hideous, terrible and terrifying it looks in its nakedness.

Can the Jews resist this organized and shameless persecution? Is there a way to preserve their self-respect, and not to feel helpless, neglected and forlorn? I submit there is. No person who has faith in a living God need feel helpless or forlorn, Jehovah of the Jews is a God more personal than the God of the Christians, the Mussalmans or the

Hindus, though as a matter of fact, in essence, He is common to all and one without a second and beyond description. But as the Jews attribute personality to God and believe that He rules every action of theirs, they ought not to feel helpless. If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood there, I would claim Germany as my home even as the tallest gentile German might, and challenge him to shoot me or cast me in the dungeon; I would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminating treatment. And for doing this I should not wait for the fellow Jews to join me in civil resistance, but would have confidence that in the end the rest were bound to follow my example. If one Jew or all the Jews were to accept the prescription here offered, he or they cannot be worse off than now. And suffering voluntarily undergone will bring them an inner strength and joy which no number of resolutions of sympathy passed in the world outside Germany can. Indeed, even if Britain, France and America were to declare hostilities against Germany, they can bring no inner joy, no inner strength. The calculated violence of Hitler may even result in a general massacre of the Jews by way of his first answer to the declaration of such hostilities. But if the Jewish mind could be prepared for voluntary suffering, even the massacre I have imagined could be turned into a day of thanksgiving and joy that Jehovah had wrought deliverance of the race even at the hands of the tyrant. For to the God-fearing, death has no terror. It is a joyful sleep to be followed by a waking that would be all the more refreshing for the long sleep.

It is hardly necessary for me to point out that it is easier for the Jews than for the Czechs to follow my prescription. And they have in the Indian Satyagraha campaign in South Africa an exact parallel. There the Indians occupied precisely the same place that the Jews occupy in Germany. The persecution had also a religious tinge. President Kruger used to say that the white Christians were the chosen of God and Indians were inferior beings created to serve the whites. A fundamental clause in the Transvaal constitution was that there should be no equality between

the whites and coloured races including Asiatics. There too the Indians were consigned to ghettos described as locations. The other disabilities were almost of the same type as those of the Jews in Germany. The Indians, a mere handful, resorted to Satyagraha without any backing from the world outside or the Indian Government. Indeed the British officials tried to dissuade the Satyagrahis from their contemplated step. World opinion and the Indian Government came to their aid after eight years of fighting. And that too was by way of diplomatic pressure, not of a threat of war.

But the Jews of Germany can offer Satyagraha under infinitely better auspices than the Indians of South Africa. The Jews are a compact, homogeneous community in Germany. They are far more gifted than the Indians of South Africa. And they have organized world opinion behind them. I am convinced that, if someone with courage and vision can arise among them to lead them in non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope. And what has today become a degrading man-hunt can be turned into a calm and determined stand offered by unarmed men and women possessing the strength of suffering given to them by Jehovah. It will be then a truly religious resistance offered against the godless fury of dehumanized man. The German Jews will score a lasting victory over the German gentiles in the sense that they will have converted the latter to an appreciation of human dignity. They will have rendered service to fellow-Germans and proved their title to be the real Germans as against those who are today dragging, however unknowingly, the German name into the mire.

And now a word to the Jews in Palestine. I have no doubt that they are going about in the wrong way. The Palestine of the Biblical conception is not a geographical tract. It is in their hearts. But if they must look to the Palestine of geography as their national home, it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of the British gun. A religious act cannot be performed with the aid of the bayonet

or the bomb. They can settle in Palestine only by the goodwill of the Arabs. They should seek to convert the Arab heart. The same God rules the Arab heart who rules the Jewish heart. They can offer Satyagraha in front of the Arabs and offer themselves to be shot or thrown into the Dead Sea without raising a little finger against them. They will find the world opinion in their favour in their religious aspiration. There are hundreds of ways of reasoning with the Arabs, if they will only discard the help of the British bayonet. As it is, they are co-sharers with the British in despoiling a people who have done no wrong to them.

I am not defending the Arab excesses. I wish they had chosen the way of non-violence in resisting what they rightly regarded as an unwarrantable encroachment upon their country. But according to the accepted canons of right and wrong, nothing can be said against the Arab resistance in the face of overwhelming odds.

Let the Jews who claim to be the chosen race prove their title by choosing the way of non-violence for vindicating their position on earth. Every country is their home including Palestine not by aggression but by loving service. A Jewish friend has sent me a book called *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization* by Cecil Roth. It gives a record of what the Jews have done to enrich the world's literature, art, music, drama, science, medicine, agriculture, etc. Given the will, the Jew can refuse to be treated as the outcast of the West, to be despised or patronized. He can command the attention and respect of the world by being man, the chosen creation of God, instead of being man who is fast sinking to the brute and forsaken by God. They can add to their many contributions the surpassing contribution of non-violent action.

*Harijan*, 26-11-1938



## SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Friends have sent me two newspaper cutting criticizing my appeal to the Jews. The two critics suggest that in presenting non-violence to the Jews as a remedy against the wrong done to them I have suggested nothing new, and that they have been practising non-violence for the past two thousand years. Obviously, so far as these critics are concerned, I did not make my meaning clear. The Jews, so far as I know, have never practised non-violence as an article of faith or even as a deliberate policy. Indeed, it is a stigma against them that their ancestors crucified Jesus. Are they not supposed to believe in eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth? Have they no violence in their hearts for their oppressors? Do they not want the so-called democratic powers to punish Germany for her persecution and to deliver them from oppression? If they do, there is no non-violence in their hearts. Their non-violence, if it may be so called, is of the helpless and the weak.

What I have pleaded for is renunciation of violence of heart and consequent active exercise of the force generated by the great renunciation. One of the critics says that favourable public opinion is necessary for the working of non-violence. The writer is evidently thinking of passive resistance conceived as a weapon of the weak. I have drawn a distinction between passive resistance of the weak and active non-violent resistance of the strong. The latter can and does work in the teeth of the fiercest opposition. But it ends in evoking the widest public sympathy. Sufferings of the non-violent have been known to melt the stoniest hearts. I make bold to say that, if the Jews can summon to their aid the soul power that comes only from non-violence, Herr Hitler will bow before the courage which he has never yet experienced in any large measure in his dealings with men, and which, when it is exhibited, he will own, is infinitely superior to that shown by his best storm troopers. The exhibition of such courage is only possible

for those who have a living faith in the God of Truth and Non-violence, i.e. Love.

Of course the critics can reasonably argue that the non-violence pictured by me is not possible for masses of mankind, it is possible only for the very few highly developed persons. I have combated that view and suggested that, given proper training and proper generalship, non-violence can be practised by masses of mankind.

I see, however, that my remarks are being misunderstood to mean that, because I advise non-violent resistance by the persecuted Jews, by inference I expect or would advise non-interference by the democratic powers on behalf of the Jews. I hardly need to answer this fear. Surely there is no danger of the great powers refraining from action because of anything I have said. They will, they are bound to, do all they can to free the Jews from the inhuman persecution. My appeal has force in the face of the fact that the great powers feel unable to help the Jews in an effective manner. Therefore it is that I have offered the prescription which I know to be infallible when taken in the right manner.

The most relevant criticism, however, which I have received is this: How do I expect the Jews to accept my prescription when I know that India, where I am myself working, where I call myself the self-appointed general, has not accepted it *in toto*? My answer is, 'Blessed are they that expect nothing.' I belong to the category of the blessed, in this case at least. Having got the prescription and being sure of its efficacy, I felt that I would be wrong if I did not draw attention to it when I saw cases where it could be effectively applied.

Sevagram, 9-12-'38

*Harijan*, 17-12-1938

## NON-VIOLENCE AND WORLD CRISIS

### The Question of Motive

Going to the very rock-bottom, one of the questioners asked Gandhiji what his motive in life was, "the thing that leads us to do what we do", whether it was religious, or social or political.

"Purely religious," replied Gandhiji. "This was the question asked me by the late Mr. Montagu when I accompanied a deputation which was purely political. 'How have you, a social reformer,' he exclaimed, 'found your way into this crowd?' My reply was that it was only an extension of my social activity. I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind, and that I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of 'sound and fury signifying nothing'."

"Seeing the influence you wield over the people," he was next asked, "may we inquire whether it is the love of the cause or the love of the people that moves you?"

"Love of the people," was Gandhiji's unhesitating reply. "Cause without the people is a dead thing. Love of the people brought the problem of untouchability early into my life. My mother said, 'You must not touch this boy, he is an untouchable.' 'Why not?' I questioned back, and from that day my revolt began."

### No Exclusion of Politics

"You would expect us Christians to copy your example. Should we allow our religious motive to plunge us into politics?"

"Those who come from different parts of the world into this country cannot say," replied Gandhiji, "'we shall have nothing to do with the politics of the country'. They would not be true to their faith, if they bargained with the government in order to supersede their fellow-feeling with the people. Supposing the government does a grievous wrong to the people of the soil and the missionaries are told that they must not lift a finger to prevent it, surely, the least they can do is to leave the country by way of signifying their displeasure at the perpetration of the wrong. If a missionary puts himself out for service, opportunities will come — today it may be in the economic sphere, tomorrow in the social, next time it may be in the political field. You cannot then say, 'I shall confine myself to this or that work and do nothing else.' When I went to South Africa I knew nothing about that country. I was bound to my client only. Yet, within seven days of my reaching there, I found that I had to deal with a situation too terrible for words."

### **Non-violence the Supreme Law**

Gandhiji was next asked in what relation his non-violence stood to the pacifist attitude, 'which we Westerners are trying to adopt without much success.'

"In my opinion," replied Gandhiji, "non-violence is not passivity in any shape or form. Non-violence, as I understand it, is the activist force in the world. Therefore, whether it is materialism or anything else, if non-violence does not provide an effective antidote, it is not the active force of my conception. Or, to put it conversely, if you bring me some conundrums that I cannot answer, I would say my non-violence is still defective. Non-violence is the supreme law. During my half a century of experience I have not yet come across a situation when I had to say that I was helpless, that I had no remedy in terms of non-violence."

### **China's Ordeal**

"What about China, you will ask. The Chinese have no designs upon other people. They have no desire for



territory. True, perhaps, China is not ready for such aggression; perhaps, what looks like her pacifism is only indolence. In any case China's is not active non-violence. Her putting up a valiant defence against Japan is proof enough that China was never intentionally non-violent. That she is on the defensive is no answer in terms of non-violence. Therefore, when the time for testing her active non-violence came, she failed in the test. This is no criticism of China. I wish the Chinese success. According to the accepted standards her behaviour is strictly correct. But when the position is examined in terms of non-violence I must say it is unbecoming for a nation of 400 millions, a nation as cultured as Japan, to repel Japanese aggression by resorting to Japan's own methods. If the Chinese had non-violence of my conception, there would be no use left for the latest machinery for destruction which Japan possesses. The Chinese would say to Japan, 'Bring all your machinery, we present half of our population to you. But the remaining two hundred millions won't bend their knee to you.' If the Chinese did that, Japan would become China's slave." And in support of his argument he referred to Shelley's celebrated lines from *The Mask of Anarchy*, "Ye are many, they are few" :

Stand ye calm and resolute,  
Like a forest close and mute,  
With folded arms and looks which are  
Weapons of unvanquished war.

And, if then the tyrants dare,  
Let them ride among you there,  
Slash, and stab, and maim and hew,—  
What they like, that let them do.

With folded arms and steady eyes,  
And little fear, and less surprise,  
Look upon them as they slay  
Till their rage has died away.

Then they will return with shame  
To the place from which they came,  
And the blood thus shed will speak  
In hot blushes on their cheek.

Rise like Lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number—  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you—  
Ye are many — they are few.

### **Mechanical Warfare and Non-violence**

“It has been objected, however,” said Gandhiji, “that non-violence is all right in the case of the Jews because there is personal contact between the individual and his persecutors, but in China Japan comes with its long-range guns and aeroplanes. The person who rains death from above has never any chance of even knowing who and how many he has killed. How can non-violence combat aerial warfare, seeing that there are no personal contacts? The reply to this is that behind the death-dealing bomb there is the human hand that releases it, and behind that still is the human heart that sets the hand in motion. And at the back of the policy of terrorism is the assumption that terrorism, if applied in a sufficient measure, will produce the desired result, namely, bend the adversary to the tyrant’s will. But supposing a people make up their mind that they will never do the tyrant’s will, nor retaliate with the tyrant’s own methods, the tyrant will not find it worth his while to go on with his terrorism. If sufficient food is given to the tyrant, a time will come when he will have had more than surfeit. If all the mice in the world held conference together and resolved that they would no more fear the cat but all run into her mouth, the mice would live. I have actually seen a cat play with a mouse. She did not kill it outright but held it between her jaws, then released it, and again pounced upon it as soon as it made an effort to escape. In the end the mouse died out of sheer fright. The cat would have derived no sport, if the mouse had not tried to run away. I learnt the lesson of non-violence from my wife, when I tried to bend her to my will. Her determined resistance to my will on the one hand, and her quiet submission to the suffering my stupidity involved on the other, ultimately made me ashamed of myself, and cured me of my stupidity in thinking that I

was born to rule over her, and in the end she became my teacher in non-violence. And what I did in South Africa was but an extension of the rule of Satyagraha which she unwillingly practised in her own person."

### **What about Dictatorships?**

But one of the visitors objected: "You do not know Hitler and Mussolini. They are incapable of any kind of moral response. They have no conscience, and they have made themselves impervious to world opinion. Would it not be playing into the hands of these dictators if, for instance, the Czechs, following your advice, confronted them with non-violence? Seeing that dictatorships are unmoral by definition, would the law of moral conversion hold good in their case?"

"Your argument," replied Gandhiji, "presupposes that the dictators like Mussolini or Hitler are beyond redemption. But belief in non-violence is based on the assumption that human nature in its essence is one and therefore unfailingly responds to the advances of love. It should be remembered that they have up to now always found ready response to the violence that they have used. Within their experience, they have not come across organized non-violent resistance on an appreciable scale, if at all. Therefore it is not only highly likely, but I hold it to be inevitable, that they would recognize the superiority of non-violent resistance over any display of violence that they may be capable of putting forth. Moreover the non-violent technique that I have presented to the Czechs does not depend for its success on the goodwill of the dictators, for, a non-violent resister depends upon the unfailing assistance of God which sustains him throughout difficulties which would otherwise be considered insurmountable. His faith makes him indomitable."

The visitor retorted that these dictators wisely refrain from using force, but simply take possession of what they want. In the circumstances what can non-violent resisters do?

"Suppose," replied Gandhiji, "they come and occupy mines, factories and all sources of natural wealth belonging to the Czechs, then the following results can

take place: (1) The Czechs may be annihilated for disobedience to orders. That would be a glorious victory for the Czechs and the beginning of the fall of Germany. (2) The Czechs might become demoralized in the presence of overwhelming force. This is a result common in all struggles. But if demoralization does take place, it would not be on account of non-violence, but it would be due to absence or inadequacy of non-violence. (3) The third thing that can take place is that Germany might use her new possessions for occupation by her surplus population. This, again, could not be avoided by offering violent resistance, for we have assumed that violent resistance is out of the question. Thus non-violent resistance is the best method under all conceivable circumstances.

"I do not think that Hitler and Mussolini are after all so very indifferent to the appeal of world opinion. But today these dictators feel satisfaction in defying world opinion because none of the so-called Great Powers can come to them with clean hands, and they have a rankling sense of injustice done to their people by the Great Powers in the past. Only the other day an esteemed English friend owned to me that Nazi Germany was England's sin, and that it was the treaty of Versailles that made Hitler."

Visitor: "What can I as a Christian do to contribute to international peace? How can international anarchy be broken down and non-violence made effective for establishing peace? Subject nations apart, how can nations at the top be made to disarm themselves?"

Gandhiji: "You as a Christian can make an effective contribution by non-violent action even though it may cost you your all. Peace will never come until the Great Powers courageously decide to disarm themselves. It seems to me that recent events must force that belief on the Great Powers. I have an implicit faith — a faith that today burns brighter than ever, after half a century's experience of unbroken practice of non-violence — that mankind can only be saved through non-violence, which is the central teaching of the Bible as I have understood the Bible."

Sevagram, 12-12-'38

PYARELAL

*Harijan*, 24-12-1938



## IS NON-VIOLENCE INEFFECTIVE ?

In dealing with my answer to the criticism that the Jews had been non-violent for 2,000 years, *The Statesman* says in the course of an editorial :

"The whole world has heard of Pastor Niemoeller and the sufferings of the Lutheran Church; here many pastors and individual Christians bore themselves bravely before People's Courts, violence and threats; without retaliation they bore noble witness to the truth. And what change of heart is there in Germany? Buried in prisons and concentration camps are today, and have been for five years, members of the Bible Searchers' League who rejected Nazi militarism as conflicting with Christ's Gospel of peace. And how many Germans know of them or, if they know, do anything about it?

"Non-violence, whether of the weak or of the strong, seems, except in very special conditions, rather a personal than a social gospel. A man's salvation may be left to himself; politicians are concerned with causes, creeds and minorities. It is suggested by Mr. Gandhi that Herr Hitler would bow before a courage 'infinitely superior to that shown by his own Storm Troopers'. If that were so, one would have supposed that he would have paid tribute to such men as Herr Von Ossietzky. Courage to a Nazi, however, seems a virtue only when displayed by his own supporters : elsewhere it becomes 'the impudent provocation of Jewish-Marxist *canaille*'. Mr. Gandhi has produced his prescription in view of the inability of the Great Powers effectively to move in the matter, an inability we all deplore and would see remedied. His sympathy may do much for the comfort of the Jews, but seems likely to do less for their enlargement. Christ is the supreme example of non-violence, and the indignities heaped upon Him at His tortured death proved once and for all that in a worldly and temporal sense it can fail hopelessly."

I do not think that the sufferings of Pastor Niemoeller and others have been in vain. They have preserved their self-respect intact. They have proved that their faith was equal to any suffering. That they have not proved sufficient for melting Herr Hitler's heart merely shows that it is made of harder material than stone. But the hardest metal yields to sufficient heat. Even so must the hardest heart

melt before sufficiency of the heat of non-violence. And there is no limit to the capacity of non-violence to generate heat.

Every action is a resultant of a multitude of forces even of a contrary nature. There is no waste of energy. So we learn in the books on mechanics. This is equally true of human actions. The difference is that in the one case we generally know the forces at work, and when we do, we can mathematically foretell the resultant. In the case of human actions, they result from a concurrence of forces, of most of which we have no knowledge. But our ignorance must not be made to serve the cause of disbelief in the power of these forces. Rather is our ignorance a cause for greater faith. And non-violence being the mightiest force in the world and also the most elusive in its working, it demands the greatest exercise of faith. Even as we believe in God in faith, so have we to believe in non-violence in faith.

Herr Hitler is but one man enjoying no more than the average span of life. He would be a spent force, if he had not the backing of his people. I do not despair of his responding to human suffering even though caused by him. But I must refuse to believe that the Germans as a nation have no heart or markedly less than the other nations of the earth. They will some day or other rebel against their own adored hero, if he does not wake up be-times. And when he or they do, we shall find that the sufferings of the Pastor and his fellow-workers had not a little to do with the awakening.

An armed conflict may bring disaster to German arms; it cannot change the German heart even as the last defeat did not. It produced a Hitler vowed to wreak vengeance on the victors. And what a vengeance it is! My answer, therefore, must be the answer that Stephenson gave to his fellow-workers who had despaired of ever filling the deep pit that made the first railway possible. He asked his co-workers of little faith to have more faith and go on filling the pit. It was not bottomless, it must be filled. Even so I do not despair because Herr Hitler's or the German heart has not yet melted. On the contrary I plead for more

suffering and still more till the melting has become visible to the naked eye. And even as the Pastor has covered himself with glory, a single Jew bravely standing up and refusing to bow to Hitler's decree will cover himself with glory and lead the way to the deliverance of the fellow-Jews.

I hold that non-violence is not merely a personal virtue. It is also social virtue to be cultivated like the other virtues. Surely society is largely regulated by the expression of non-violence in its mutual dealings. What I ask for is an extension of it on a larger, national and international scale.

I was unprepared to find the view expressed by *The Statesman* writer that the example of Christ proved once and for all that in a worldly and temporal sense it can fail hopelessly!! Though I cannot claim to be a Christian in the sectarian sense, the example of Jesus's suffering is a factor in the composition of my undying faith in non-violence which rules all my actions wordly and temporal. And I know that there are hundreds of Christians who believe likewise. Jesus lived and died in vain, if he did not teach us to regulate the whole of life by the eternal Law of Love.

On the train to Bardoli, 2-1-'39

*Harijan*, 7-1-1939

### 31

## CHINA AND JAPAN

Gandhiji went straight to the question on which he wanted to hear first hand from Dr. Kagawa. "What is the feeling of people in Japan about the war?"

"I am rather a heretic in Japan," said Dr. Kagawa. "Rather than I express my views, I would like to learn from you what you would do if you were in my position."

"It would be presumptuous for me to express my views."

"No, I would like very much to know what you would do."

"I would declare my heresies and be shot. I would put the co-operatives and all your work in one scale, and put the honour of your nation in the other, and if you found

that the honour was being sold, I should ask to declare your views against Japan and in so doing make Japan live through your death. But, for this, inner conviction is necessary. I do not know that I should be able to do all that I have said if I were in your position, but I must give you my opinion since you have asked for it."

"The conviction is there. But friends have been asking me to desist."

"Well, don't listen to friends when the Friend inside you says, 'Do this.' And friends, however good, can sometimes well deceive us. They cannot argue otherwise. They would ask you to *live* and do your work. The same appeal was made to me when I took the decision to go to jail. But I did not listen to friends, with the result that I found the glow of freedom when I was confined within the four solid walls of prison. I was inside a dark cell, but I felt that I could see everything from within those walls, and nothing from outside."

*Harijan*, 21-1-1939

M. D.

### 32

## A WORLD IN AGONY—I

### Cultural Destruction ?

(Rev. Lew, the distinguished visitor from China, said:)

"We are not afraid of material destruction, distressing though it is, but of cultural destruction. The first bomb in Shanghai hit a library. Colleges have been wiped out. Professors have been killed. New education has been disorganized and forced to migrate into the interior."

"Even worse is the moral injury they have done us," he continued. And he gave a lurid description of how a systematic attempt is being made to force the drug evil upon China, which they had been, for the last twenty years, trying to fight tooth and nail. "When they occupied Peking they opened 50 new brothels there, filling them with Korean girls. The army of occupation rapes women everywhere, the figure for Peking alone being anything between 8,000 to 20,000 according to various estimates.



In Shanghai the revenue in one month from gambling and drug shops that have been opened under Japanese authority amounted to 250 thousand dollars. The morale of the whole nation is being sapped. There is no hope once you are enslaved by the drug habit on a nation-wide scale. Supposing we win the war after 10 or 15 years, we may restore material devastation, but how shall we redeem our young generation?

"We want your message. We have translated your *Autobiography* into Chinese. We look to you for spiritual guidance."

### **Culture is Bomb-proof**

Gandhiji replied: "I was once asked by a Chinese friend from Shantiniketan to give a message to the Chinese people. I had to ask him to excuse me. I gave him my reasons. If I merely said I sympathized with the Chinese in their struggle, it would be not of much value as coming from me. I should love to be able to say to the Chinese definitely that their salvation lay only through non-violent technique. But then it is not for a person like me, who is outside the fight, to say to a people who are engaged in a life and death struggle, 'Not this way, but that.' They would not be ready to take up the new method, and they would be unsettled in the old. My interference would only shake them and confuse their minds.

"But whilst I have no 'message' to send to the Chinese people who are engaged in fighting, I have no hesitation in presenting my viewpoint to you. I was almost going to ask you as to what you meant by being culturally ruined. I should be sorry to learn that Chinese culture resided in brick and mortar or in huge tomes which the moth can eat. A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people. Chinese culture is Chinese only to the extent that it has become part and parcel of Chinese life. Your saying, therefore, that your culture and your morals are in danger of being destroyed, leads one to think that the reform movement in your country was only skin-deep. Gambling had not disappeared from the people's hearts. It was kept down not by the tone set by society, but by the

penalty of the law. The heart continued to gamble. Japan is of course to blame and must be blamed for what it has done or is doing. But then Japan is just now like the wolf whose business it is to make short work of the sheep. Blaming the wolf would not help the sheep much. The sheep must learn not to fall into the clutches of the wolf.

"If even a few of you took to non-violence, they would stand forth as living monuments of Chinese culture and morals. And then, even if China were overwhelmed on the battlefield, it would be well with China in the end, because it would at the same time be receiving a message which contains a promise of hope and deliverance. Japan cannot force drugs down unwilling throats at the point of the bayonet. It can only set up temptations. You cannot teach people to resist these temptations by replying to Japanese force by force. Whatever else force may or may not be able to achieve, it cannot safeguard Chinese morals or save Chinese culture.

"If you feel the truth of my remarks, you will become a living message to China. You will then tell the Chinese people, 'No matter what material destruction Japan inflicts, it cannot bring about China's cultural destruction. Our people must be sufficiently educated and warned to resist all the temptations that Japan may devise. Monuments and cities may be razed to the ground. They are but a passing show, that is going one day to be claimed by time as its own. If they are destroyed by the Japanese, it will only be a morsel taken out of time's mouth. The Japanese cannot corrupt our soul. If the soul of China is injured, it will not be by Japan.'"

### **Non-violent Technique**

One of the companions asked, "Is it not necessary that individuals should practise non-violence first in their own person, in their relations with other individuals?" And by way of illustration he described how, even after he came to have the conviction that non-violence was the law of life, for years he refused to preach its use in outer affairs to others. "I said I would first try myself to live it and perfect myself in its practice. I began by making a resolve

not to answer back or refute criticism directed against me. After seven years I gave a report of my experience to my students. I cannot say that in practice my method has always answered. So I say to myself, 'Patience, I must try again.'"

"It would be a delusion to think otherwise," replied Gandhiji. "If one does not practise non-violence in one's personal relations with others and hopes to use it in bigger affairs, one is vastly mistaken. Non-violence like charity must begin at home. But if it is necessary for the individual to be trained in non-violence, it is even more necessary for the nation to be trained likewise. One cannot be non-violent in one's own circle and violent outside it. Or else, one is not truly non-violent even in one's own circle; often the non-violence is only in appearance. It is only when you meet with resistance, as for instance, when a thief or a murderer appears, that your non-violence is put on its trial. You either try or should try to oppose the thief with his own weapons, or you try to disarm him by love. Living among decent people, your conduct may not be described as non-violent. Mutual forbearance is not non-violence. Immediately, therefore, you get the conviction that non-violence is the law of life, you have to practise it towards those who act violently towards you; and the law must apply to nations as to individuals. Training is no doubt necessary. And beginnings are always small. But if the conviction is there, the rest will follow."

Another question was: "In the practice of non-violence, is there not danger of developing a 'martyrdom complex' or pride creeping in?"

Gandhiji: "If one has that pride and egoism, there is no non-violence. Non-violence is impossible without humility. My own experience is that whenever I have acted non-violently I have been led to it and sustained in it by the higher promptings of an unseen power. Through my own will I should have miserably failed. When I first went to jail, I quailed at the prospect. I had heard terrible things about jail life. But I had faith in God's protection. Our experience was that those who went to jail in a prayerful spirit came out victorious, those who had gone in their own

strength failed. There is no room for self-pitying in it either, when you say God is giving you the strength. Self-pity comes when you do a thing for which you expect recognition from others. But here there is no question of recognition."

### **To Fight or not to Fight**

Another friend thus placed his dilemma: "I am a firm believer in non-violence. Eight years ago I read your *Experiments with Truth* and immediately became converted to the way of life you have there advocated. Shortly after that I translated the book into Chinese. And then came the Japanese invasion. My faith in non-violence was put to a severe test and I was caught in a dilemma. On the one hand I felt I could not preach non-violence to my people who were never militaristic but who now believed that resistance with force was the only way out. It was the best thing they knew, and I believe with you that 'I would rather risk the use of force a thousand times than let my people lose their manhood.' But on the other hand, when I try to take a sympathetic attitude and try to do something helpful in such a situation, I find I am giving moral and material support directly and indirectly to something which is against the highest that I know. There seems to be no way out of this dilemma because I cannot live in a vacuum and anything I do will work one way or the other. While I can believe without reserve in non-violence in personal relationships, even though I fall far short of it, I cannot feel in the same way when I am faced with a national situation in which the great majority of the people have not even heard of the way of non-violence."

### **The Non-violent Equivalent**

"Yours is a difficult situation," replied Gandhiji. "Such difficulties have confronted me more than once. I took part on the British side in the Boer War by forming an ambulance corps. I did likewise at the time of what has been described as the Zulu Revolt. The third time was during the Great War. I believed in non-violence then. My motive was wholly non-violent. That seemingly inconsistent conduct gave me strength. My example cannot be used as a precedent for others to follow. Looking back upon



my conduct on those three occasions, I have no sense of remorse. I know this too that my non-violent strength did not suffer diminution because of those experiences. The actual work I was called upon to do was purely humanitarian, especially during the Zulu Revolt. I and my companions were privileged to nurse the wounded Zulus back to life. It is reasonable to suggest that but for our services some of them would have died. I cite this experience not to justify my participation, however indirect it was. I cite it to show that I came through that experience with greater non-violence and with richer love for the great Zulu race. And I had an insight into what war by white men against coloured races meant.

“The lesson to be learnt from it by you is that, placed as you are in a position of hopeless minority, you may not ask your people to lay down their arms unless their hearts are changed and by laying down their arms they feel the more courageous and brave. But whilst you may not try to wean people from war, you will in your person live non-violence in all its completeness and refuse all participation in war. You will develop love for the Japanese in your hearts. You will examine yourself whether you can really love ~~them~~, whether you have not some ill-will towards them for all the harm they are doing. It is not enough to love them by remembering their virtues. You must be able to love them in spite of all their misdeeds. If you have that love for the Japanese in your hearts, you will proceed to exhibit in your conduct that higher form of courage which is the hall-mark of true non-violence and which your Chinese friends will not fail to detect and recognize as such. You will not wish success to Japanese arms because you ‘love’ the Japanese. At the same time you will not pray for the success of Chinese arms. It is very difficult to judge, when both sides are employing weapons of violence, which side ‘deserves’ to succeed. You will, therefore pray only that the right should prevail. Whilst you will keep yourself aloof from all violence, you will not shirk danger. You will serve friend and foe alike with a reckless disregard for your life. You will rush forth if there is an outbreak of an epidemic or a fire to be combated, and distinguish

yourself by your surpassing courage and non-violent heroism. But you will refuse to call the curses of heaven upon the Japanese. If by chance some Japanese soldiers or airmen fall into the hands of the Chinese and are in danger of being lynched by an infuriated Chinese mob or otherwise ill-treated, you will plead for them with your own people and, if necessary, even protect them with your life. You know the story of Emily Hobhouse. Though an Englishwoman, she courageously went to the Boer concentration camps. She exhorted the Boers never to lose heart, and it is said that, if she had not steeled the hearts of the Boer women as she did, the war might have taken a different turn. She was full of wrath against her own people for whom she had not a good word to say. You would not copy her unmeasured wrath which somewhat vitiated her non-violence, but you will copy her love for the 'enemy' that made her denounce the misdeeds of her own countrymen. Your example will affect the Chinese, and might even shame some Japanese who will become bearers of your message among the Japanese.

"A very slow process, you will perhaps say. Yes, possibly, under the existing adverse circumstances to begin with. But it will gather momentum and speed in an incalculable manner as you proceed. I am an irrepressible optimist. My optimism rests on my belief in the infinite possibilities of the individual to develop non-violence. The more you develop it in your own being, the more infectious it becomes till it overwhelms your surroundings and by and by might oversweep the world."

"I, a believer in non-violence, often find that I am actuated by mixed motives. So does a war general have mixed motives. Is it not possible to fight, with love for the enemy in one's heart? May we not shoot out of love?"

Gandhiji: "We do often have mixed motives. But that would not be non-violence. There can be degrees in violence, not in non-violence. The constant effort of the votary of non-violence is to purge himself of hatred towards the so-called enemy. There is no such thing as shooting out of love in the way you suggest."

### Can Non-violence Be Organized ?

The last to place before Gandhiji his problem was Mr. P. C. Hsu. "Our difficulty is this," he commented, "while sincerely believing in non-violence, we have not found a way of making it effective."

"Should that present a difficulty?" exclaimed Gandhiji. "A person who realizes a particular evil of his time and finds that it overwhelms him, dives deep in his own heart for inspiration, and when he gets it, he presents it to others. Meetings and group organizations are all right. They are of some help, but very little. They are like the scaffolding that an architect erects — a temporary and makeshift expedient. The thing that really matters is an invincible faith that cannot be quenched.

"Faith can be developed. Only, the way it can be developed and in which it works differs from that in the case of violence. You cannot develop violence through prayer. Faith, on the other hand, cannot be developed except through prayer.

"Non-violence succeeds only when we have a living faith in God. Buddha, Jesus, Mahomed — they were all warriors of peace in their own style. We have to enrich the heritage left by these world teachers. God has His own wonderful way of executing His plans and choosing His instrument. The Prophet and Abu Bakr trapped in a cave were saved from their persecutors by a spider which had woven its web across the mouth of that cave. All the world teachers you should know, began with a zero!!"

Bardoli, 15-1-'39

PYARELAL

*Harijan*, 28-1-1939

## A WORLD IN AGONY — II

### A Programme for Africa

The success of the non-violence programme of the Congress has brought to some of their (the Negro race in the Union of South Africa—Ed.) leaders a fresh glimmer of hope, and Rev. Tema was anxious to learn the secret of that success. "How can my people make their Congress as successful as the Indian National Congress?" he asked Gandhiji.

"The Congress," replied Gandhiji, "became successful for the simple reason that it was inaugurated by the most selfless and cultured people that could be found in that age. They made themselves the representatives of the people, and captured their imagination by reason of service and self-sacrifice. They were from the people and of the people." After describing in some detail the services and the evolution of the Congress as a democratic organization, Gandhiji proceeded: "You have not, as far as I am aware, a band of Africans who would be content to work and live in impecuniosity. Among those who are educated there is not that absolute selflessness. Again, while most of your leaders are Christians, the vast mass of the Bantus and Zulus are not Christians. You have adopted European dress and manners, and have as a result become strangers in the midst of your own people. Politically, that is a disadvantage. It makes it difficult for you to reach the heart of the masses. "You must not be afraid of being 'Bantuized' or feel ashamed of carrying an assagai or of going about with only a tiny clout round your loins. A Zulu or a Bantu is a well-built man and need not be ashamed of showing his body. He need not dress like you. You must become Africans once more."

### A Non-white United Front ?

Of late there has been some talk of forming an Indo-African united Non-white Front in South Africa. "What do you think about it," asked Rev. Tema. "It will be a mistake,"



replied Gandhiji. "You will be pooling together not strength but weakness. You will best help one another by each standing on his own legs. The two cases are different. The Indians are a microscopic minority. They can never be a 'menace' to the white population. You, on the other hand, are the sons of the soil who are being robbed of your inheritance. You are bound to resist that. Yours is a far bigger issue. It ought not to be mixed up with that of the Indians. This does not preclude the establishment of the friendliest relations between the two races. The Indians can co-operate with you in a number of ways. They can help you by always acting on the square towards you. They may not put themselves in opposition to your legitimate aspirations, or run you down as 'savages' while exalting themselves as 'cultured' people, in order to secure concessions for themselves at your expense."

Rev. Tema: "What sort of relations would you favour between these two races?"

Gandhiji: "The closest possible. But while I have abolished all distinction between an African and an Indian, that does not mean that I do not recognize the difference between them. The different races of mankind are like different branches of a tree — once we recognize the common parent stock from which we are sprung, we realize the basic unity of the human family, and there is no room left for enmities and unhealthy competition."

Rev. Tema: "Should we adopt violence or non-violence as a means for our deliverance?"

Gandhiji: "Certainly, non-violence under all circumstances. But you must have a living faith in it. Even when there is impenetrable darkness surrounding you, you must not abandon hope. A person who believes in non-violence believes in a living God. He cannot accept defeat. Therefore, my advice is non-violence all the time, but non-violence of the brave, not of the coward."

"Your example," continued Rev. Tema, "has shed so much influence upon us that we are thinking whether it would not be possible for one or two of our young men, who, we are hoping, will become leaders, to come to you for training."

"It is quite a good and sound idea," replied Gandhiji.

Rev. Tema: "Do you think Christianity can bring salvation to Africa?"

Gandhiji: "Christianity, as it is known and practised today, cannot bring salvation to your people. It is my conviction that those who today call themselves Christians do not know the true message of Jesus. I witnessed some of the horrors that were perpetrated on the Zulus during the Zulu Rebellion. Because one man, Bambatta, their chief, had refused to pay his tax, the whole race was made to suffer. I was in charge of an ambulance corps. I shall never forget the lacerated backs of Zulus who had received stripes and were brought to us for nursing because no white nurse was prepared to look after them. And yet those who perpetrated all those cruelties called themselves Christians. They were 'educated', better dressed than the Zulus, but not their moral superiors."

Rev. Tema had one more question to ask. "Whenever a leader comes up in our midst, he flops down after a while. He either becomes ambitious after money or succumbs to the drink habit or some other vice and is lost to us. How shall we remedy this?"

"The problem is not peculiar to you," replied Gandhiji. "Your leadership has proved ineffectual because it was not sprung from the common people. If you belong to the common people, live like them and think like them, they will make common cause with you. If I were in your place, I would not ask a single African to alter his costume and make himself peculiar. It does not add a single inch to his moral stature."

Bardoli, 6-2-'39

*Harijan*, 18-2-1939

PYARELAL

## A POLISH SISTER'S AGONY

"In spite of all I am going to try to reach Poland—sailing tonight—to Basra in Iraq, then through Turkey and Rumania. The inner call is irresistible. It may seem madness from the ordinary human point of view. Now I am not going for my mother's sake or for my dearest friends who are now on the battlefields—ready to die at any moment—it is for Poland itself. I believe countries have also souls. Souls of nations are a reality, not a theory, for me. If I reach the soul of Poland, I will feel satisfied, even if I do not find those whom I love. It is the soul (and body) of the nation itself that is in its supreme hour of martyrdom. I believe Poland bleeds and struggles not only for her own rights but for the Right, the Just, the True; for the freedom of all nations, India including. I feel Hindu to the bottom of my heart; Indian as much as Pole, both motherlands are to be in my soul to the last day of my life. But I could not live if I would not do what is humanly possible to reach the feet of the Mother who is now bleeding in agony of pain. I shall write from the way, but not when I reach the war zone; I shall only think often about you and send mental messages as well as I can. Bapuji, do pray in all fervour of your great loving heart for those thousands of innocent people who suffer incredible pain and misery in Poland. It is these that need most sympathy and blessings and tender thoughts."

This is the letter a Polish sister wrote from Bombay harbour. I have known her for some years. She is herself a believer through and through in non-violence. But her very non-violence made her restless. Her whole soul has rebelled against the wrong, as she thinks, that is being perpetrated against her motherland. So she has gone to find the Poland of her imagination fighting to the last ditch, not for merely preserving her own freedom but for the freedom of all those nations who have lost it. And in this she naturally includes her second love, India. May her dream prove true. If Poland has that measure of uttermost bravery and an equal measure of selflessness, history will forget that she defended herself with violence. Her violence will be counted almost as non-violence.

Sevagram, 18-9-'39

*Harijan*, 23-9-1939

## CONUNDRUMS

Thus asks a well-known Congressman:

"1. What is your personal attitude towards this war consistent with non-violence?

2. Is it the same as, or different from your attitude during the last war?

3. How could you with your non-violence actively associate with and help the Congress whose policy is based on violence in the present crisis?

4. What is your concrete plan based on non-violence to oppose or prevent this war?"

These questions conclude a long friendly complaint about my seeming inconsistencies or my inscrutability. Both are old complaints, perfectly justified from the standpoint of the complainants, wholly unjustified from my own. Therefore my complainants and I must agree to differ. Only this let me say. At the time of writing I never think of what I have said before. My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given question, but to be consistent with truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth; I have saved my memory an undue strain; and what is more, whenever I have been obliged to compare my writing even of fifty years ago with the latest, I have discovered no inconsistency between the two. But friends who observe inconsistency will do well to take the meaning that my latest writing may yield unless, of course, they prefer the old. But before making the choice they should try to see if there is not an underlying and abiding consistency between the two seeming inconsistencies.

So far as my inscrutability is concerned, friends should take my assurance that there is never any attempt on my part to suppress my thought when it is relevant. Sometimes it arises from my desire to be brief. And sometimes it



must be due to my own ignorance of the subject on which I may be called upon to give an opinion.

To give a typical instance, a friend, between whom and me there never is any mental reservation, thus writes in anguish rather than anger:

"In the not-improbable event of India being a theatre of war, is Gandhiji prepared to advise his countrymen to bare their breasts to the enemy's sword? A little while ago I would have pledged my word he would do so, but I am not confident any more."

I can only assure him that, notwithstanding my recent writings, he can retain his confidence that I would give the same advice as he expects I would have given before, or as I gave to the Czechs or the Abyssinians. My non-violence is made of stern stuff. It is firmer than the firmest metal known to the scientists. Yet, alas, I am painfully conscious of the fact that it has still not attained its native firmness. If it had, God would have shown me the way to deal with the many local cases of violence that I helplessly witness daily. This is said not in arrogance but in the certain knowledge of the power of perfect non-violence. I will not have the power of non-violence to be underestimated in order to cover my limitations or weaknesses.

Now for a few lines in answer to the foregoing questions.

1. My personal reaction towards this war is one of greater horror than ever before. I was not so disconsolate before as I am today. But the greater horror would prevent me today from becoming the self-appointed recruiting sergeant that I had become during the last war. And yet, strange as it may appear, my sympathies are wholly with the Allies. Willynilly this war is resolving itself into one between such democracy as the West has evolved and totalitarianism as it is typified in Herr Hitler. Though the part that Russia is playing is painful, let us hope that the unnatural combination will result in a happy though unintended fusion whose shape no one can foretell. Unless the Allies suffer demoralization, of which there is not the slightest indication, this war may be used to end all wars, at any rate of the virulent type that we see today. I have the hope that India, distraught though it is with internal

dissensions, will play an effective part in ensuring the desired end and the spread of cleaner democracy than hitherto. This will undoubtedly depend upon how the Working Committee will ultimately act in the real tragedy that is being played on the world stage. We are both actors in and spectators of the drama. My line is cast. Whether I act as a humble guide of the Working Committee or, if I may use the same expression without offence, of the Government, my guidance will be for the deliberate purpose of taking either or both along the path of non-violence, be the step ever so imperceptible. It is plain that I cannot force the pace either way. I can only use such power as God may endow my head or heart with for the moment.

2. I think I have covered the second question in answering the first.

3. There are degrees of violence as of non-violence. The Working Committee has not wilfully departed from the policy of non-violence. It could not honestly accept the real implications of non-violence. It felt that the vast mass of Congressmen had never clearly understood that in the event of danger from without they were to defend the country by non-violent means. All that they had learnt truly was that they could put up a successful fight, on the whole non-violent, against the British Government. Congressmen have had no training in the use of non-violence in other fields. Thus, for example, they had not yet discovered a sure method of dealing successfully in a non-violent manner with communal riots or goondaism. The argument is final inasmuch as it is based on actual experience. I would not serve the cause of non-violence, if I deserted my best co-workers because they could not follow me in an extended application of non-violence. I therefore remain with them in the faith that their departure from the non-violent method will be confined to the narrowest field and will be temporary.

4. I have no ready-made concrete plan. For me too this is a new field. Only I have no choice as to the means. It must always be purely non-violent, whether I am closeted with the members of the Working Committee or with

the Viceroy. Therefore what I am doing is itself part of the concrete plan. More will be revealed to me from day to day, as all my plans always have been. The famous non-co-operation resolution came to me within less than 24 hours of the meeting of the A.I.C.C. at which it was moved in Calcutta in 1920; and so did practically the Dandi March. The foundation of the first civil resistance under the then known name of passive resistance was laid by accident at a meeting of Indians in Johannesburg in 1906 convened for the purpose of finding the means of combating the anti-Asiatic measure of those days. I had gone to the meeting with no preconceived resolution. It was born at the meeting. The creation is still expanding. But assuming that God had endowed me with full powers (which He never does), I would at once ask the English to lay down arms, free all their vassals, take pride in being called "little Englanders", and defy all the totalitarians of the world to do their worst. Englishmen will then die unresistingly and go down to history as heroes of non-violence. I would further invite Indians to co-operate with Englishmen in this godly martyrdom. It will be an indissoluble partnership drawn up in letters of the blood of their own bodies, not of their so-called enemies. But I have no such general power. Non-violence is a plant of slow growth. It grows imperceptibly but surely. And even at the risk of being misunderstood, I must act in obedience to "*the still small voice*".

On the train to Simla, 25-9-'39

*Harijan*, 30-9-1939

## INDIA'S ATTITUDE

I agree with Kamaladevi's analysis of the motives of the parties to the war. Both are fighting for their existence and for the furtherance of their policies. There is, however, this great difference between the two: however incomplete or equivocal the declarations of the Allies are, the world has interpreted them to mean that they are fighting for saving democracy. Herr Hitler is fighting for the extension of the German boundaries, although he was told that he should allow his claims to be submitted to an impartial tribunal for examination. He contemptuously rejected the way of peace or persuasion and chose that of the sword. Hence my sympathy for the cause of the Allies. But my sympathies must not be interpreted to mean endorsement, in any shape or form, of the doctrine of the sword for the defence even of proved right. Proved right should be capable of being vindicated by right means as against the rule, i.e. sanguinary, means. Man may and should shed his own blood for establishing what he considers to be his 'right'. He may not shed the blood of his opponent who disputes his 'right'. India as represented by the Congress has been fighting in order to prove her 'right', not by the sword but by the non-violent method. And she has carved out for herself a unique place and prestige in the world, although she is yet far — let us hope, not very far — from the independence of her dream. Her novel method has evidently struck the imagination of the world. It has the right to expect India to play a decisive part in this war, which no people of the world have wanted, by insisting that the peace this time is not to be a mockery, designed to share among the victors the spoils of war and to humiliate the vanquished. Jawaharlal Nehru, who has a right to speak for the Congress, has said in stately language that the peace must mean freedom for those who are held in bondage by the imperialist powers of the world. I have every hope that the Congress will also be able to

show the world that the power that armaments give to defend right is nothing compared to the power that non-violence gives to do the same thing and that too with better show of reason. Armaments can show no reason, they can make only a pretence of it.

Sevagram, 9-10-'39

*Harijan*, 14-10-1939

## 37

## ON TRIAL

In the course of the conversation with the members of the Working Committee, I discovered that their non-violence had never gone beyond fighting the British Government with that weapon. I had hugged the belief that Congressmen had appreciated the logical result of the practice of non-violence for the past twenty years in fighting the biggest imperialist power in the world. But in great experiments like that of non-violence, hypothetical questions have hardly any play. I myself used to say in answer to questions that when we had actually acquired independence we would know whether we could defend ourselves non-violently or not. But today the question is no longer hypothetical. Whether there is on the part of the British Government a favourable declaration or not, the Congress has to decide upon the course it would adopt in the event of an invasion of India. For though there may be no settlement with the Government, the Congress has to declare its policy and say whether it would fight the invading host violently or non-violently.

So far as I can read the Working Committee's mind after a fairly full discussion, the members think that Congressmen are unprepared for non-violent defence against armed invasion.

This is tragic. Surely the means adopted for driving an enemy from one's house must, more or less, coincide with those to be adopted for keeping him out of the house. If anything, the latter process must be easier. The fact, however, is that our fight has not been one of non-violent



resistance of the strong. It has been one of passive resistance of the weak. Therefore there is no spontaneous response in our hearts, at this supreme moment, to an undying faith in the efficacy of non-violence. The Working Committee, therefore, wisely said that they were not ready for the logical step. The tragedy of the situation is that, if the Congress is to throw in its lot with those who believe in the necessity of armed defence of India, the past twenty years will have been years of gross neglect of the primary duty of Congressmen to learn the science of armed warfare. And I fear that history will hold me, as the general of the fight, responsible for the tragedy. The future historian will say that I should have perceived that the nation was learning not non-violence of the strong but merely passivity of the weak, and that I should have, therefore, provided for Congressmen's military training.

Being obsessed with the idea that somehow or other India will learn true non-violence, it would not occur to me to invite my co-workers to train themselves for armed defence. On the contrary, I used to discountenance all sword-play and the display of stout lathis. Nor am I even now repentant for the past. I have the unquenchable faith that, of all the countries in the world, India is the one country which can learn the art of non-violence, that if the test were applied even now, there would be found, perhaps, thousands of men and women who would be willing to die without harbouring malice against their persecutors. I have harangued crowds and told them repeatedly that they might have to suffer much including death by shooting. Did not thousands of men and women brave hardships during the salt campaign equal to any that soldiers are called upon to bear? No different capacity is required from what has been already evinced, if India has to contend against an invader. Only it will have to be on vaster scale.

One thing ought not to be forgotten. India unarmed would not require to be destroyed through poison gas or bombardment. It is the Maginot line that has made the Siegfried line necessary. And *vice versa*. Defence of India by the present methods has been necessary because she

is an appendage of Britain. Free India can have no enemy. And if her people have learnt the art of saying resolutely 'no' and acting up to it, I dare say, no one would want to invade her. Our economy would be so modelled as to prove no temptation for the exploiter.

But some Congressmen will say: "Apart from the British, India has so many martial races within her border that they will want to put up a fight for the country which is as much theirs as ours." This is perfectly true. I am therefore talking, for the moment, only of Congressmen. How would they act in the event of an invasion? We shall never convert the whole of India to our creed unless we are prepared to die for it.

My position is, therefore, confined to myself alone. I have to find out whether I have any fellow-traveller along the lonely path. If I am in the minority of one I must try to make converts. Whether one or many, I must declare my faith that it is better for India to discard violence altogether even for defending her borders. For India to enter into the race for armaments is to court suicide. With the loss of India to non-violence the last hope of the world will be gone. I must live up to the creed I have professed for the last half a century, and hope to the last breath that India will make non-violence her creed, preserve man's dignity, and prevent him from reverting to the type from which he is supposed to have raised himself.

Sevagram, 10-10-'39

*Harijan*, 14-10-1939

## A POSER

A Britisher has written to Deenabandhu Andrews a letter on the war expounding his own views. He is an ardent pacifist. Deenabandhu has shared the letter with me. In it occur the following paragraphs:

"For India too I think that this is a very critical time. The danger I see is that Britain may promise full Dominion Status or something of the kind, and as a result India will raise an army and become one more military-minded nation. Her witness for the way of non-violence and soul-force would then be largely discounted.

"How can Gandhiji as a believer in non-violence ask for clarification of war aims with a view to getting India's support for Britain in this way of war? The only thing that he can do and that we should all be doing is to build up an army of men and women who are committed to the way of love and forgiveness and to receive, but never to return, violence. We have to work this out to see how it will alter our daily life as well as all our thinking and acting towards other communities and nations. We have to be disciplined in this and also to learn to act together as one man. Along this line I see tremendous possibilities.

"Of course, we should also use all the influence we can to urge Britain to acknowledge and put into practice full democracy in India, as it is a high principle quite apart from whether India helps Britain in the war or not."

The danger that the writer senses is real. I dealt with it last week. The writer cavils at my sympathy with the Allies. I have shown it as an out-and-out believer in non-violence, even because of my belief. Whilst all violence is bad and must be condemned in the abstract, it is permissible for, it is even the duty of, a believer in Ahimsa to distinguish between the aggressor and the defender. Having done so, he will side with the defender in a non-violent manner, i. e. give his life in saving him. His intervention is likely to bring a speedier end to the duel, and may even result in bringing about peace between the combatants. Applying the argument to the present war, if the Congress actively sides with the Allies in a non-violent way, the Congress

assistance will lift the Allied cause to a high moral plane, and the Congress influence will be effectively used in the cause of peace. What is more it will be the special business of the Congress to see that, if the war is fought to a finish, no humiliation is heaped upon the vanquished. That is the role I have conceived for the Congress. The declaration of independence has become a necessity. The question having been raised, the Congress cannot help Britain, if Britain is secretly fighting for imperialism while it declares to the world that the fight is for saving democracies. For Britain to be in the right, a clear declaration of her war aim is a necessity, irrespective of the Congress policy.

Sevagram, 16-10-'39

*Harijan*, 21-10-1939

## 39

## THE HOUR OF TRIAL

(With the members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh)

“Non-violence is not a cloistered virtue, confined only to the Rishi and the cave-dweller. It is capable of being practised by the millions, not with full knowledge of its implications, but because it is the law of our species. It distinguishes man from the brute. But man has not shed the brute in him. He has to strive to do so. This striving applies to the practice of non-violence, not to the belief in it. I cannot strive to believe in a principle: I either believe in it or I do not. And if I believe in it, I must bravely strive to practise it. Ahimsa is an attribute of the brave. Cowardice and Ahimsa do not go together any more than water and fire. It is that Ahimsa that every member of the Gandhi Seva Sangh has to make a conscious effort to develop in himself.

“We have often thought about this question, but the hour of our trial has arrived today, as much with reference to war as with the struggle for Swaraj and equally with reference to Hindu-Muslim unity. Remember also that your non-violence cannot operate effectively unless you have faith in the spinning wheel. I would ask you to read

*Hind Swaraj* with my eyes and see therein the chapter on how to make India non-violent. You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages. Even if Hitler was so minded, he could not devastate seven hundred thousand non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process. Rural economy, as I have conceived it, eschews exploitation altogether, and exploitation is the essence of violence. You have, therefore, to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent, and to be rural-minded you have to have faith in the spinning wheel."

### Posers

The members slept over this discourse and met Gandhiji again the next day. Numerous questions were troubling them, as they should everyone who is a votary of Ahimsa. But out of regard for Gandhiji's time they limited themselves to a few.

"How can a believer in the non-violence of your conception be a minister?"

"I fear he cannot in the present state of things," said Gandhiji. "We have seen that our ministers have had to resort to violence even as the British Government in the pre-autonomy days. It was inevitable perhaps. Had Congressmen been truly non-violent, there would have been no resort to force. But the Congress majorities were not based on unadulterated non-violence. A minister said the other day that, although he had not given up an iota of non-violence, he could not do without resorting to the minimum of firing. He had resorted to it only to the extent that it was unavoidable. He may have said it then; he may not say it again if I can help it. For, if he goes in again, he will have made his position clear, and he will represent a House that is predominantly non-violent. In other words, he will take office, if he is sure that the people would let him carry on the government on a non-violent basis."

"But may it not be that whereas a non-violent minister will confine violence to the lowest minimum, one who does not believe in non-violence would observe no such restraint?"



"That belief is a delusion. All those who are using violence today make the same claim. Hitler too would say the same thing. General Dyer was acclaimed as the hero of the hour by the House of Lords because his object was said to be to prevent the spread of mob violence. Soviet Russia believes its violence is a transitional stage to the establishment of an order without violence.

Non-violence is impossible without self-purification. Let us, therefore, be members of a self-purification association, but no association is necessary for that purpose. Therefore let us try, each in our own way, to face difficulties and problems as they come and see how far we can go. In Hudli, two years ago, I asked you to help in the elections and in sending the best possible men to the legislature. I gave advice in the atmosphere as it existed then. I cannot give you that advice today. In fact the time may have come when it becomes necessary for such of you as believe in the non-violence of the brave to retire from the Congress as I did in 1934."

"How do you think that the masses can practise non-violence, when we know that they are all prone to anger, hate, ill-will? They are known to fight for the most trivial things."

"They are, and yet I think they can practise non-violence for the common good. Do you think the thousands of women that collected contraband salt had ill-will against anyone? They knew that the Congress or Gandhi had asked them to do certain things, and they did those things in faith and hope. To my mind the most perfect demonstration of non-violence was in Champaran. Did the thousands of ryots who rose up in revolt against the agrarian evils harbour the least ill-will against the Government or the planters? Their belief in non-violence was unintelligent, even as the belief in the earth being round with many is unintelligent. But their belief in their leaders was genuine, and that was enough. With those who lead it is another matter. Their belief has got to be intelligent, and they have to live up to all the implications of the belief."

"But then are not the masses the world over like that?"

"They are not, for others have not that background of non-violence."

"But if there was non-violence ingrained in our masses, how should they have come to this state of slavery?"

"*There* indeed is what I flatter myself is going to be my contribution. I want that non-violence of the weak to become non-violence of the brave. It may be a dream, but I have to strive for its realization."

Sevagram, 29-10-'39

*Harijan*, 4-11-1939

#### 40

### MY ADVICE TO NOAKHALI HINDUS

Their case is more or less like the Sukkur case. There is a great difference in degree. But I feel sure that no popularly elected government can successfully cope with widespread goondalism as it is alleged to be in Noakhali. It is essentially a case of self-defence. Self-respect and honour cannot be protected by others. They are for each individual himself or herself to guard. Governments can at best punish offenders after the offence has been committed. They cannot assure prevention except in so far as punishment acts as a deterrent. Self-defence can be violent or non-violent. I have always advised and insisted on non-violent defence. But I recognize that it has to be learnt like violent defence. It requires a different training from that which is required for violent defence. Therefore, if the capacity for non-violent self-defence is lacking, there need be no hesitation in using violent means. But Manoranjan Babu, being an old Congressman, said, "You say I cannot retaliate even in self-defence?" "That is certainly my view," I replied. "There was, however, a resolution passed by the Gaya Congress that the use of force in self-defence was permissible to Congressmen. I have never justified the resolution. Non-violence becomes meaningless, if violence is permitted for self-defence. What is it but self-defence in national resistance against an aggressor nation? I would,

therefore, advise secession from the Congress, if you contemplate the use of force in defending yourselves in the circumstances described by you."

"But," said Manoranjan Babu, "supposing I adopt the Gaya resolution, would I be accused of communalism, if I defended the aggrieved Hindus?" "Certainly not," I replied. "In the first place, you do not cease to be Hindu because you are a Congressman. You will, however, be guilty of communalism, if you sided with Hindus right or wrong. In the case in point you will defend Hindus, not because they are Hindus but because they are afflicted. I would expect you to defend Muslims if you found them molested by Hindus. A Congressman recognizes or should recognize no communal distinction."

Calcutta, 26-2-'40

*Harijan*, 2-3-1940

#### 41

### WHEN THE BRITISH WITHDRAW

"Unless you adopt an all-party form of government, you are paving the way towards sowing Hindu-Muslim conflict after the British protection is withdrawn. It was not non-violence but your tremendous magnetism plus the backing of British bayonet that kept the Congress in power. Try non-violence without the latter for two or three months, and the truth of the above will be realized."

Thus writes an esteemed correspondent. I have no difficulty in endorsing the remark that it was the British bayonet that kept the Congress ministries in power. My 'magnetism' may have had something to do with the victory at the polls. But it proved utterly useless to keep ministries in power. The sustaining force was the British bayonet. This only shows that the people at large have not yet imbibed the lesson of non-violence.

The remedy is not an all-party government. Such will be no government of the people for the people. It will be the government of a caucus for its own ends. The caucus will have no smoother sailing than the Congress ministries had. It will also have to rely upon the British

bayonet. There can be no manly peace in the land unless the British bayonet is withdrawn. The risk of riots has to be run. Non-violence will be born out of such risks, if at all it is to be part of national life. It is daily becoming crystal clear that real unity will not come so long as the British bayonet crushes the free spirit of the people. The peace it imposes is the peace of the grave. I feel that riots will be a welcome relief, if that is the price we have to pay for freedom. For out of them I can conceive the possibility of peace coming, not out of the present unreality. The way out of riots on the one hand and British bayonets on the other is frank acceptance of non-violence. To this my life is dedicated, and my faith in its possibility and efficacy will survive the dissolution of my body.

On the train to Wardha, 3-3-'40

*Harijan*, 9-3-1940

## 42

### TWO QUESTIONS FROM AMERICA

A friend writing from America propounds the following two questions:

"1. Granted that Satyagraha is capable of winning India's independence, what are the chances of its being accepted as a principle of State policy in a free India? In other words, would a strong and independent India rely on Satyagraha as a method of self-preservation, or would it lapse back to seeking refuge in the age-old institution of war, however defensive its character? To restate the question on the basis of a purely theoretic problem: Is Satyagraha likely to be accepted only in an uphill battle, when the phenomenon of martyrdom is fully effective, or is it also to be the instrument of a sovereign authority which has neither the need nor the scope of behaving on the principle of martyrdom?

2. Suppose a free India adopts Satyagraha as an instrument of State policy, how would she defend herself against probable aggression by another sovereign State? To restate the question on the basis of a purely theoretic problem: What would be the Satyagrahic action-patterns to meet the invading army at the frontier? What kind of resistance can be offered the opponent before a

common area of action, such as the one now existing in India between the Indian nationalists and the British government, is established? Or should the Satyagrahis withhold their action until after the opponent has taken over the country?"

The questions are admittedly theoretical. They are also premature for the reason that I have not mastered the whole technique of non-violence. The experiment is still in the making. It is not even in its advanced stage. The nature of the experiment requires one to be satisfied with one step at a time. The distant scene is not for him to see. Therefore my answers can only be speculative.

In truth, as I have said before, now we are not having unadulterated non-violence even in our struggle to win independence.

As to the first question, I fear that the chances of non-violence being accepted as a principle of State policy are very slight, so far as I can see at present. If India does not accept non-violence as her policy after winning independence, the second question becomes superfluous.

But I may state my own individual view of the potency of non-violence. I believe that a State can be administered on a non-violent basis, if the vast majority of the people are non-violent. So far as I know, India is the only country which has a possibility of being such a State. I am conducting my experiment in that faith. Supposing, therefore, that India attained independence through pure non-violence, India could retain it too by the same means. A non-violent man or society does not anticipate or provide for attacks from without. On the contrary, such a person or society firmly believes that nobody is going to disturb them. If the worst happens, there are two ways open to non-violence. To yield possession, but non-co-operate with the aggressor. Thus supposing that a modern edition of Nero descended upon India, the representatives of the State will let him in, but tell him that he will get no assistance from the people. They will prefer death to submission. The second way would be non-violent resistance by the people who have been trained in the non-violent way. They would offer themselves unarmed as fodder for the aggressor's cannons. The underlying belief in either



case is that even a Nero is not devoid of a heart. The unexpected spectacle of endless rows upon rows of men and women simply dying rather than surrender to the will of an aggressor must ultimately melt him and his soldiery. Practically speaking, there will be probably no greater loss in men than if forcible resistance was offered; there will be no expenditure in armaments and fortifications. The non-violent training received by the people will add inconceivably to their height. Such men and women will have shown personal bravery of a type far superior to that shown in armed warfare. In each case the bravery consists in dying, not in killing. Lastly, there is no such thing as defeat in non-violent resistance. That such a thing has not happened before is no answer to my speculation. I have drawn no impossible picture. History is replete with instances of individual non-violence of the type I have mentioned. There is no warrant for saying or thinking that a group of men and women cannot by sufficient training act non-violently as a group or nation. Indeed the sum total of the experience of mankind is that men somehow or other live on, from which fact I infer that it is the law of love that rules mankind. Had violence, i.e. hate, ruled us, we should have become extinct long ago. And yet the tragedy of it is that the so-called civilized men and nations conduct themselves as if the basis of society was violence. It gives me ineffable joy to make experiments proving that love is the supreme and only law of life. Much evidence to the contrary cannot shake my faith. Even the mixed non-violence of India has supported it. But if it is not enough to convince an unbeliever, it is enough to incline a friendly critic to view it with favour.

Sevagram, 8-4-'40

*Harijan*, 13-4-1940

## DEMOCRACY AND NON-VIOLENCE

*Q.* Why do you say, "Democracy can only be saved through non-violence"? (The questioner is an American friend.)

*A.* Because democracy, so long as it is sustained by violence, cannot provide for or protect the weak. My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest. That can never happen except through non-violence. No country in the world today shows any but patronizing regard for the weak. The weakest, you say, go to the wall. Take your own case. Your land is owned by a few capitalist owners. The same is true of South Africa. These large holdings cannot be sustained except by violence, veiled if not open. Western democracy, as it functions today, is diluted Nazim or Fascism. At best it is merely a cloak to hide the Nazi and the Fascist tendencies of imperialism. Why is there the war today, if it is not for the satisfaction of the desire to share the spoils? It was not through democratic methods that Britain bagged India. What is the meaning of South African democracy? Its very constitution has been drawn to protect the white man against the coloured man, the natural occupant. Your own history is perhaps blacker still, in spite of what the Northern States did for the abolition of slavery. The way you have treated the Negro presents a discreditable record. And it is to save such democracies that the war is being fought. There is something very hypocritical about it. I am thinking just now in terms of non-violence and trying to expose violence in its nakedness.

India is trying to evolve true democracy, i.e. without violence. Our weapons are those of Satyagraha expressed through the Charkha, the village industries, primary education through handicrafts, removal of untouchability, communal harmony, prohibition, and non-violent organization of labour as in Ahmedabad. These mean mass

effort and mass education. We have big agencies for conducting these activities. They are purely voluntary, and their only sanction is service of the lowliest.

This is the permanent part of the non-violent effort. From this effort is created the capacity to offer non-violent resistance called non-co-operation and civil disobedience which may culminate in mass refusal to pay rent and taxes. As you know, we have tried non-co-operation and civil disobedience on a fairly large scale and fairly successfully. The experiment has in it promise of a brilliant future. As yet our resistance has been that of the weak. The aim is to develop the resistance of the strong. Your wars will never ensure safety for democracy, India's experiment can and will, if the people come up to the mark or, to put it another way, if God gives me the necessary wisdom and strength to bring the experiment to fruition.

Sevagram, 13-5-'40

*Harijan*, 18-5-1940

#### 44

### HOW TO COMBAT HITLERISM

Whatever Hitler may ultimately prove to be, we know what Hitlerism has come to mean. It means naked ruthless force reduced to an exact science and worked with scientific precision. In its effect it becomes almost irresistible.

In the early days of Satyagraha when it was still known as passive resistance, *The Star* of Johannesburg, stirred by the sight of a handful of Indians, wholly unarmed and incapable of organized violence even if they wished it, pitting themselves against an overwhelmingly armed government, had a cartoon in which the latter was depicted as a steam-roller representing irresistible force, and passive resistance was depicted as an elephant unmoved and comfortably planting himself in his seat. This was marked immovable force. The cartoonist had a true insight into the duel between the irresistible and the immovable forces. It was then a stalemate. The sequel we know. What

was depicted and appeared to be irresistible was successfully resisted by the immovable force of Satyagraha—call it suffering without retaliation.

What became true then can be equally true now. Hitlerism will never be defeated by counter-Hitlerism. It can only breed superior Hitlerism raised to *n*th degree. What is going on before our eyes is a demonstration of the futility of violence as also of Hitlerism.

Let me explain what I mean by failure of Hitlerism. It has robbed the small nations of their liberty. It has compelled France to sue for peace. Probably by the time this is in print Britain will have decided upon her course. The fall of France is enough for my argument. I think French statesmen have shown rare courage in bowing to the inevitable and refusing to be party to senseless mutual slaughter. There can be no sense in France coming out victorious if the stake is in truth lost. The cause of liberty becomes a mockery, if the price to be paid is wholesale destruction of those who are to enjoy liberty. It then becomes an inglorious satiation of ambition. The bravery of the French soldier is world-known. But let the world know also the greater bravery of the French statesmen in suing for peace. I have assumed that the French statesmen have taken the step in a perfectly honourable manner as behoves true soldiers. Let me hope that Herr Hitler will impose no humiliating terms but show that, though he can fight without mercy, he can at least conclude peace not without mercy.

But to resume the thread of the argument. What will Hitler do with his victory? Can he digest so much power? Personally he will go as empty-handed as his not very remote predecessor Alexander. For the Germans he will have left not the pleasure of owning a mighty empire but the burden of sustaining its crushing weight. For they will not be able to hold all the conquered nations in perpetual subjection. And I doubt if the Germans of future generations will entertain unadulterated pride in the deeds for which Hitlerism will be deemed responsible. They will honour Herr Hitler as a genius, as a brave man, a matchless organizer, and much more. But I should hope that the

Germans of the future will have learnt the art of discrimination even about their heroes. Anyway I think it will be allowed that all the blood that has been spilled by Hitler has added not a millionth part of an inch to the world's moral stature.

As against this imagine the state of Europe today if the Czechs, the Poles, the Norwegians, the French and the English had all said to Hitler: "You need not make your scientific preparation for destruction. We will meet your violence with non-violence. You will, therefore, be able to destroy our non-violent army without tanks, battleships and airships." It may be retorted that the only difference would be that Hitler would have got without fighting what he has gained after a bloody fight. Exactly. The history of Europe would then have been written differently. Possession might (but only might) have been then taken under non-violent resistance, as it has been taken now after perpetration of untold barbarities. Under non-violence only those would have been killed who had trained themselves to be killed, if need be, but without killing anyone and without bearing malice towards anybody. I dare say that in that case Europe would have added several inches to its moral stature. And in the end I expect it is the moral worth that will count. All else is dross.

I have written these lines for the European Powers. But they are meant for ourselves. If my argument has gone home, is it not time for us to declare our changeless faith in non-violence of the strong and say we do not seek to defend our liberty with the force of arms, but we will defend it with the force of non-violence?

Sevagram, 18-6-'40

*Harijan*, 22-6-1940



## BOTH HAPPY AND UNHAPPY

It was on the 18th instant that I expressed the following hope in *Harijan*:

"If my argument has gone home, is it not time for us to declare our changeless faith in non-violence of the strong and say we do not seek to defend our liberty with the force of arms, but we will defend it with the force of non-violence?"

On the 21st the Working Committee felt unable to enforce such faith in action when the time for it came. For the Committee never before had an occasion to test their faith. At the last meeting they had to lay down a course of action for meeting impending anarchy within and danger of aggression from without.

I pleaded hard with the Committee: "If you have faith in non-violence of the strong, now is the time to act up to it. It does not matter that many parties do not believe in non-violence whether of the strong or of the weak. Probably that is all the greater reason for Congressmen to meet the emergency by non-violent action. For if all were non-violent, there could be no anarchy and there would be no question of anybody arming for meeting aggression from without. It is because Congressmen represent a party of non-violence, in the midst of parties who do not believe in it, that it becomes imperative for Congressmen to show that they are well able to act up to their faith.

But the members of the Working Committee felt that Congressmen would not be able to act up to it. It would be a new experience for them. They were never before called upon to deal with such a crisis. The attempt made by me to form peace brigades to deal with communal riots and the like had wholly failed. Therefore they could not hope for the action contemplated.

My position was different. With the Congress non-violence was always a policy. It was open to it to reject it if it failed. If it could not bring political and economic independence, it was of no use. For me non-violence is a

creed. I must act up to it whether I am alone or have companions. Since propagation of non-violence is the mission of my life, I must pursue it in all weathers. I felt that now was the time for me to prove my faith before God and man. And so I asked for absolution from the Committee. Hitherto I have been responsible for guiding the general policy of the Congress. I could no longer do so when fundamental differences were discovered between them and me. They readily recognized the correctness of my attitude. And they gave me the absolution. Once more they have justified the trust imposed in them. They have been true to themselves. They had not the confidence in themselves or those whom they represented, that they could express in their actions the required measure of non-violence. And so they made the only choice they could honestly make. It was a tremendous sacrifice they made — the sacrifice of the prestige that the Congress had gained in the world for unadulterated non-violence, and the dissolution of the unwritten and unspoken bond between them and me. But though it is a break in the common practice of a common ideal or policy, there is no break in the friendship of over twenty years' standing.

I am both happy and unhappy over the result. Happy because I have been able to bear the strain of the break and have been given the strength to stand alone. Unhappy because my word seemed to lose the power to carry with me those whom it was my proud privilege to carry all these many years which seem like yesterday. But I know that, if God shows me the way to demonstrate the efficacy of non-violence of the strong, the break will prove to have been temporary. If there is no way, they will have justified their wisdom in bearing the wrench of letting me go my way alone. If that tragic discovery of my impotence is in store for me, I hope still to retain the faith that has sustained me all these years and to have humility enough to realize that I was not fit enough instrument to carry the torch of non-violence any further.

But this argument and doubt are based upon the assumption that the members of the Working Committee represent the feeling of the vast majority of Congressmen. They

would wish, and I hope, that the vast majority of Congressmen had in them the non-violence of the strong. No one would be more glad than they to discover that they had underrated Congressmen's strength. The probability, however, is that there is no majority but only a good minority which represents the non-violence of the strong. It should be remembered that the matter does not lend itself to argument. The members of the Working Committee had all the argument before them. But non-violence, which is a quality of the heart, cannot come by an appeal to the brain. Therefore what is required is a quiet but resolute demonstration of non-violent strength. The opportunity comes to everyone almost daily. There are communal clashes, there are dacoities, there are wordy duels. In all these things those who are truly non-violent can and will demonstrate it. If it is shown in an adequate measure, it will not fail to infect their surroundings. I am quite clear that there is not a single Congressman who disbelieves in the efficacy of non-violence out of sheer cussedness. Let the Congressmen who believe that the Congress should adhere to non-violence in dealing with internal disorders or external aggression, express it in their daily conduct. Non-violence of the strong cannot be a mere policy. It must be a creed, or a passion, if 'creed' is objected to. A man with a passion expresses it in every little act of his. Therefore he who is possessed by non-violence will express it in the family circle, in his dealings with neighbours, in his business, in Congress meetings, in public meetings, and in his dealings with opponents. It is because it has not expressed itself in this way among Congressmen that the members of the Working Committee rightly concluded that Congressmen were not ready for non-violent treatment of internal disorders or external aggression. Embarrassment caused by non-violent action would move established authority to yield to popular will. But such action has obviously no play in the face of disorders. We have to court death without retaliation and with no malice or anger towards those who bring about disorder. It is easy enough to see that non-violence required here is of a wholly different type from what the Congress has known hitherto. But it is the only non-violence that is true and

that can save the world from self-destruction. This is a certainty sooner or later, sooner rather than later, if India cannot deliver the message of true non-violence to a world which wants to be saved from the curse of wars and does not know how to find the deliverance.

Sevagram, 24-6-'40

*Harijan*, 29-6-1940

## 46

## TO EVERY BRITON

I appeal to every Briton, wherever he may be now, to accept the method of non-violence instead of that of war, for the adjustment of relations between nations and other matters. Your statesmen have declared that this is a war on behalf of democracy. There are many other reasons given in justification. You know them all by heart. I suggest that, at the end of the war, whichever way it ends, there will be no democracy left to represent democracy. This war has descended upon mankind as a curse and a warning. It is a curse inasmuch as it is brutalizing man on a scale hitherto unknown. All distinctions between combatants and non-combatants have been abolished. No one and nothing is to be spared. Lying has been reduced to an art. Britain was to defend small nationalities. One by one they have vanished, at least for the time being. It is also a warning. It is a warning that, if nobody reads the writing on the wall, man will be reduced to the state of the beast, whom he is shaming by his manners. I read the writing when the hostilities broke out. But I had not the courage to say the word. God has given me the courage to say it before it is too late.

I appeal for cessation of hostilities, not because you are too exhausted to fight, but because war is bad in essence. You want to kill Nazism. You will never kill it by its indifferent adoption. Your soldiers are doing the same work of destruction as the Germans. The only difference is that perhaps yours are not as thorough as the Germans. If that be so, yours will soon acquire the same thoroughness as

theirs, if not much greater. On no other condition can you win the war. In other words, you will have to be more ruthless than the Nazis. No cause, however just, can warrant the indiscriminate slaughter that is going on minute by minute. I suggest that a cause that demands the inhumanities that are being perpetrated today cannot be called just.

I do not want Britain to be defeated, nor do I want her to be victorious in a trial of brute strength, whether expressed through the muscle or the brain. Your muscular bravery is an established fact. Need you demonstrate that your brain is also as unrivalled in destructive power as your muscle? I hope you do not wish to enter into such an undignified competition with the Nazis. I venture to present you with a nobler and a braver way, worthy of the bravest soldier. I want you to fight Nazism without arms, or, if I am to retain the military terminology, with non-violent arms. I would like you to lay down the arms you have as being useless for saving you or humanity. You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions. Let them take possession of your beautiful island, with your many beautiful buildings. You will give all these but neither your souls, nor your minds. If these gentlemen choose to occupy your homes, you will vacate them. If they do not give you free passage out, you will allow yourself man, woman and child, to be slaughtered, but you will refuse to owe allegiance to them.

This is no appeal made by a man who does not know his business. I have been practising with scientific precision non-violence and its possibilities for an unbroken period of over fifty years. I have applied it in every walk of life, domestic, institutional, economic and political. I know of no single case in which it has failed. Where it has seemed sometimes to have failed, I have ascribed it to my imperfections. I claim no perfection for myself. But I do claim to be a passionate seeker after Truth, which is but another name for God. In the course of that search the discovery of non-violence came to me. Its spread is my life mission. I have no interest in living except for the prosecution of that mission.



I claim to have been a lifelong and wholly disinterested friend of the British people. At one time I used to be also a lover of your empire. I thought that it was doing good to India. When I saw that in the nature of things it could do no good, I used, and am still using, the non-violent method to fight imperialism. Whatever the ultimate fate of my country, my love for you remains, and will remain, undiminished. My non-violence demands universal love, and you are not a small part of it. It is that love which has prompted my appeal to you.

May God give power to every word of mine. In His name I began to write this, and in His name I close it. May your statesmen have the wisdom and courage to respond to my appeal. I am telling His Excellency the Viceroy that my services are at the disposal of His Majesty's Government, should they consider them of any practical use in advancing the object of my appeal.

New Delhi, 2-7-'40

*Harijan*, 6-7-1940

#### 47

### BEFORE THE GANDHI SEVA SANGH

#### **The Test of Genuineness**

“ You will examine every action of yours in the light of the creed. That does not mean that you will be morbid or pernickety. Your conduct will have to be natural. When I began observing silence it meant an effort on my part. Now it has become part of my nature, and to break my silence means an effort. In the same way acting non-violently must be part of your nature. It is likely that your relating everything to non-violence may be logically wrong, but it is not wrong for you. I may be wrong, in the eyes of others, in my belief that with every thread that I draw I am bringing Swaraj nearer, but for me the belief is as true as the fact that I exist. That saves me from losing my sanity. This spinning wheel is a symbol of non-violence for me. The wheel as such is lifeless, but when I invest it with symbolism it becomes a living thing for me. Its sound,

if it is musical, is in tune with non-violence. If it is unmusical, it is not in tune with it, for it indicates carelessness on my part. The steel spindle one can use as a deadly weapon, but we have put it there for the best possible use. So we have to be meticulously careful about every part of the wheel. Then and then only will it produce fine music and spinning will be a true sacrificial act.

"But this kind of *sadhana*, you will say, may take thousands of years. It may take some a thousand years, and it may take some others only one year. Don't think that, if in spite of my fifty years' practice of it I am still imperfect, it must take you many more years. No, there is no rule of three here. You may succeed quicker than I. I meant what I said to Prithwisingh: 'You had at any rate the violence of the brave. I had nothing of it. Now if you believe in cultivating non-violence of the brave, you will do so much more quickly than I, and you will leave me behind.' This applies to every one of you. In South Africa I was the first to learn shoemaking, and so I taught it to others. But those others soon left me behind. It was because I was a true teacher. Now if I am a true teacher of Ahimsa, I am sure you will soon leave behind your teacher. If that does not happen, it will only mean that I was an unfit teacher. But if my teaching fructifies, there will be teachers of Ahimsa in every home.

"I want to know how many of you are with me. If none goes with me, I am ready to tread my path alone. For I know that I can never be *alone* as God is there with me. You are all companion *sadhaks* (seekers) with me. I am old, but you have many years before you. And yet let me tell you that I do not feel the weight of my years. I do not think my power of growth or capacity for research has come to an end.

"So you have to go forth and find out how many actual believers in Ahimsa there are among Congressmen. The Working Committee members are your representatives. If they were mistaken in assessing the faith of their electors, you have to correct their judgment. My position was different from theirs. I consider myself a confirmed representative of Ahimsa and so I severed my connection with the

Congress in 1934. I could not help doing it. If I had not done so, I should have been untrue to my creed.

"No one knows my imperfections better than I, but what little power I possess is derived from my Ahimsa. What is it but my Ahimsa that draws thousands of women to me in fearless confidence? But neither you nor I can trade on our capital. We have to be up and doing every moment of our lives, and go forward in our *sadhana*. We have to live and move and have our being in Ahimsa even as Hitler does in Himsa. It is the faith and perseverance and single-mindedness with which he has perfected his weapons of destruction that commands my admiration. That he uses them as a monster is immaterial for our purpose. We have to bring to bear the same single-mindedness and perseverance in evolving our Ahimsa. Hitler is awake all the twenty-four hours of the day in perfecting his *sadhana*. He wins because he pays the price. His inventions surprise his enemies. But it is his single-minded devotion to his purpose that should be the object of our admiration and emulation. Although he works all his waking hours, his intellect is unclouded and unerring. Are our intellects unclouded and unerring? A mere belief in Ahimsa or the Charkha will not do. It should be intelligent and creative. If intellect plays a large part in the field of violence, I hold that it plays a larger part in the field of non-violence."

### **Why an Imperfect Man Chosen?**

To those who have been saying that, if Gandhiji has failed in perfecting his Ahimsa failure is certain in their case, he had already given the answer. But in the concluding part of the speech he presented another aspect of his imperfection. He said: "In placing civil disobedience before constructive work I was wrong, and I did not profit by the Himalayan blunder that I had committed. I feared that I should estrange my co-workers, and so carried on with imperfect Ahimsa. But I am not sorry for my blunders. My imperfections and failures are as much a blessing from God as my successes and my talents, and I lay them both at His feet. Why should He have chosen me, an imperfect instrument, for such a mighty experiment? I think He

deliberately did so. He had to serve the poor dumb ignorant millions. A perfect man might have been their despair. When they found that one with their failings was marching on towards Ahimsa, they too had confidence in their own capacity. We should not have recognized a perfect man if he had come as our leader, and we might have driven him to a cave. May be who follows me will be more perfect and you will be able to receive his message. May be some one of you may be that perfect teacher who is to come."

### **An Impossible Ideal ?**

But are we not being driven to philosophical anarchism? Is that not an impossible ideal? These questions were asked by a philosophic friend some months ago, and Gandhiji gave him replies which, I think, will be useful today.

"Does anyone know true non-violence?" he asked.

Gandhiji immediately replied: "Nobody knows it, for nobody can practise perfect non-violence."

"Then how can it be used in politics?"

"It can be used in politics precisely as it can be used in the domestic sphere. We may not be perfect in our use of it, but we definitely discard the use of violence, and grow from failure to success."

"You would govern non-violently. But all legislation is violence."

"No, not all legislation. Legislation imposed by people upon themselves is non-violence to the extent it is possible in society. A society organized and run on the basis of complete non-violence would be the purest anarchy."

"Do you think it is a realizable ideal?"

"Yes. It is realizable to the extent non-violence is realizable. That State is perfect and non-violent where the people are governed the least. The nearest approach to purest anarchy would be a democracy based on non-violence. The European democracies are to my mind a negation of democracy."

"Do you think that non-violence of the democracy which you visualize was ever realized in the olden times?"

"I do not know. But if it was not, it only means that we had never made the attempt to realize the highest in us. I have no doubt in my mind that at some stage we were wiser, and that we have to grow wiser than we are today in order to find what beauties are hidden in human nature. Perfect non-violence is impossible so long as we exist physically, for we would want some space at least to occupy. Perfect non-violence whilst you are inhabiting the body is only a theory like Euclid's point or straight line, but we have to endeavour every moment of our lives."

Sevagram, 15-7-'40

M. D.

*Harijan*, 21-7-1940

## 48

### UNREPENTANT

"Two English friends, who admire you, say your appeal to every Briton cannot have any effect *just now*. It is impossible to expect the man in the street to do a complete *volte face* with any degree of understanding — indeed it is impossible for the understanding to do, as you say, without a *heart*-belief in non-violence. The time to mould a new world on your lines will be *after* the war. They realize your way is the right one, but they say it needs endless preparation and instruction and *big* leadership — none of which they possess. Regarding India they say the attitude of the present authority is deplorable. Long ago India should have been declared as independent as Canada, and her people should be allowed to work out their own constitution. But what they are extremely perplexed about now is that you want absolute independence straightaway, and the next step you will take is 'no further help to Britain in the prosecution of war, surrender to Germany, and opposition to her by non-violent means'. You must explain what you mean in more detail so as to remove this misunderstanding. This is an honest reaction."

The appeal was intended, to produce the effect now. It could not come out of a mathematical calculation. If the conviction could have come, action was an easy matter. The mass mind responds under pressure. That the appeal has not produced the intended result shows that either my



word has no power or that God has a purpose of which we have no knowledge. The appeal has come from an anguished heart. I could not suppress it. It was not written for the moment. I am quite sure that it enunciates a truth of eternal value.

If the ground is not prepared from now, there may be no time left after a dismal termination of the war for evolving a new order. Whatever the order, it will be in response to a conscious or unconscious effort from now. Indeed the effort began before my appeal. I hope that it has stimulated it, perhaps given it a definite direction. I suggest to the non-official leaders and moulders of British opinion, if they are convinced of the truth of my position, to work for its adoption. Compared to the big issue raised in my appeal, the question of Indian independence pales into insignificance. But I hold with the two Englishmen that the British government's attitude is deplorable. The two friends are wholly wrong in the deduction they have drawn from the assumed recognition of India's independence. They forget that I am out of the picture. Those who are responsible for the Working Committee's last resolution have meant free India's co-operation with Britain. With them, there is no question of surrender to Germany or non-violent opposition.

But I must not here tarry on Indian independence and its implications, tempting though the subject is.

The cuttings and correspondence before me say that the Congress rejection of my advice to abstain from preparation for military defence of India precludes me from making the appeal to Britain or from expecting a favourable response. The argument is plausible, but only plausible. The critics say that, if I have failed with my people, I have no right to expect Britain whilst she is in the midst of a life and death struggle to listen to me. I am a man with a mission. India's millions have never tasted the bitters of war as the British have. Britain, if she is to fulfil her declared purpose, needs a radical change in her policy. I feel that I know the change that is needed. My inability to persuade the Working Committee is irrelevant to the theme under discussion. There is no analogy between

India's case and Britain's. I am, therefore, wholly unrepentant. I maintain that in issuing my appeal I have acted wholly as a lifelong friend of Britain.

A writer, however, retorts: "Address your appeal to Hitler." In the first place, I did write to Herr Hitler. My letter was published in the press some time after I addressed it. In the second place, there can be no meaning in my appeal to Herr Hitler to adopt non-violence. He is marching from victory to victory. I can only appeal to him to desist. That I have done. But to Britain, which is just now on the defensive, I can present the really effective weapon of non-violent non-co-operation. Let my method be rejected on merits, not by bringing inapt analogies or untenable argument. The issue raised by me, I venture to think, is of universal importance. The usefulness of the non-violent method seems to be granted by all the critics. They gratuitously assume the impossibility of human nature, as it is constituted, responding to the strain involved in non-violent preparation. But that is begging the question. I say, "You have never tried the method on any scale. In so far as it has been tried, it has shown promising results."

Sevagram, 17-7-'40

*Harijan*, 21-7-1940

## 49

### KHANSAHEB'S AHIMSA

In the storm that shook most of the members of the Working Committee, Khansaheb Abdul Gaffar Khan stood firm as a rock. He had never any doubt about his position, and his statement, which I reproduce below, should serve as a beacon light to all of us:

"Some recent resolutions of the Congress Working Committee indicate that they are restricting the use of non-violence to the fight for India's freedom against constituted authority. How far and in what manner this will have to be applied in the future I cannot say. The near future will perhaps throw light on this. Meanwhile it is difficult for me to continue in the Congress Working Committee, and I am resigning from it.

I should like to make it clear that the non-violence I have believed in and preached to my brethren of the Khudai Khidmatgars is much wider. It affects all our life, and only this has permanent value. Unless we learn this lesson of non-violence fully, we shall never do away with the deadly feuds which have been the curse of the people of the Frontier. Since we took to non-violence and the Khudai Khidmatgars pledged themselves to it, we have largely succeeded in ending these feuds. Non-violence has added greatly to the courage of the Pathans. Because they were previously addicted to violence far more than others, they have profited by non-violence much more. We shall never really and effectively defend ourselves except through non-violence. Khudai Khidmatgars must, therefore, be what our name implies — pure servants of God and humanity — by laying down our own lives and never taking any life."

It is worthy of the Khansahab and all that he has stood for during the past twenty years. He is a Pathan, and a Pathan may be said to be born with a rifle or sword in his hand. But the Khansahab deliberately asked his Khudai Khidmatgars to shed all weapons when he asked them to join the Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act. He saw that this deliberate giving up of the weapons of violence had a magical effect. It was the only remedy for the blood-feuds which were handed down from sire to son and which had become part of the normal life of a Pathan. They had decimated numerous families, and non-violence seemed to the Khansahab to have come as a longed-for salvation. The violent blood-feuds would otherwise have no end and would spell the end of the Pathans. He saw as clear as daylight that, if he could persuade his people not to retaliate, the suicidal feuds would cease and the Pathans would be able to give a better account of their bravery. They took up his message, and put into practice what with them became non-violence of the brave.

Being so clear about his own faith and that of the Khudai Khidmatgars, there was for him no escape from resignation of his membership of the Congress Working Committee. His continuing on it would have been anomalous and might have meant an end of his life's work. He could not ask his people to join as recruits in the army and

at the same time forget the law of tribal retaliation. The simple Pathan would have argued with him — and the argument would have been irresistible — that the present war was a war of retaliation and revenge, and that there was no difference between it and their blood-feuds.

I do not know how far the Khansaheb has succeeded in carrying his message to his people. This I know that with him non-violence is a matter not of intellectual conviction but of intuitive faith. Nothing can, therefore, shake it. About his followers he cannot say how far they will adhere to it. But that does not worry him. He has to do his duty which he owes to them. The result he leaves to God. He derives his Ahimsa from the Holy Quran. He is a devout Musalman. During his stay with me for over a year I never saw him miss his Namaz (prayers) or his Ramzan fast except when he was ill. But his devotion to Islam does not mean disrespect for other faiths. He has read the Gita. His reading is slight but selective, and he immediately assimilates what appeals to him. He loathes long argument and does not take long to make up his mind. If he succeeds in his mission, it would mean the solution of many another problem. But the result no one can predict. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."

Sevagram, 16-7-'40

*Harijan*, 21-7-1940

## HOW TO CULTIVATE AHIMSA ?

Let us confine ourselves to Ahimsa. We have all along regarded the spinning wheel, village crafts, etc. as the pillars of Ahimsa, and so indeed they are. They must stand. But we have now to go a step further. A votary of Ahimsa will of course base upon non-violence, if he has not already done so, all his relations with his parents, his children, his wife, his servants, his dependants, etc. But the real test will come at the time of political or communal disturbances or under the menace of thieves and dacoits. Mere resolve to lay down one's life under the circumstances is not enough. There must be the necessary qualification for making the sacrifice. If I am a Hindu, I must fraternize with the Musalmans and the rest. In my dealing with them I may not make any distinction between my co-religionists and those who might belong to a different faith. I would seek opportunities to serve them without any feeling of fear or unnaturalness. The word 'fear' can have no place in the dictionary of Ahimsa. Having thus qualified himself by his selfless service, a votary of pure Ahimsa will be in a position to make a fit offering of himself in a communal conflagration. Similarly, to meet the menace of thieves and dacoits, he will need to go among, and cultivate friendly relations with the communities from which thieves and dacoits generally come.

A brilliant example of this kind of work is provided by Ravishankar Maharaj. His work among the criminal tribes in Gujarat has evoked praise even of the Baroda State authorities. There is an almost unlimited field for this kind of work, and it does not call for any other talent in one besides pure love. Ravishankar Maharaj is an utter stranger to English. Even his knowledge of Gujarati is barely sufficient for everyday use. But God has blessed him with unlimited neighbourly love. His simplicity easily wins all hearts, and is the envy of everybody. Let his example



provide a cue and inspiration to all those who may be similarly engaged in other fields of Satyagraha.

Sevagram, 16-7-'40

*Harijan*, 21-7-1940

## 51

### WHAT OF THE 'WEAK MAJORITY'?

Prof. Timur of Islamia College, Peshawar, writes:

"The world is indebted to you for revealing to it in these hard times the hidden values of non-violence. The experiment which you want to make of defending India against foreign aggression without the use of arms would be the boldest moral experiment of all times. There are two possible results of such a course. Either the conscience of the invaders may be awakened by the love of the invaded and they may repent of their sin. Or the proud invaders may take non-violence as a sign of physical weakness and degeneration, and may think it right to subjugate, rule over, and exploit, a weak people. This is the doctrine of Nietzsche which is followed in practice by Hitler. A great loss is involved in such conquest of the physically weak by the physically strong. A few strong-willed members of the conquered nation may refuse to own allegiance to the conquerors, but the large majority always submits and adopts servile manners to preserve its existence. Among them may be found great scientists, philosophers and artists. Genius and moral strength are not always combined in the same man. The strong man does not need armies to defend his liberty. He sacrifices his body to preserve his soul. Such men are, however, few and far between. It is the weak majority which needs protection. The question is how to protect it by non-violent methods. This is the real difficulty which every patriot feels when he thinks of adopting non-violence for the defence of his country."

The weak majority no doubt needs protection. If all were soldiers either of Ahimsa or Himsa, no such questions as call for discussion in these columns would arise. There is always a weak majority that would want protection against man's mischief. The orthodox method we know. Nazism is its logical outcome. It is an answer to a definite want. A terrible wrong wantonly perpetrated against a whole

nation cried out for redress. And Hitler arose to avenge it. Whatever the ultimate fortune of the war, Germany will not be humiliated again. Humanity will not stand a second outrage. But in seeking to avenge the wrong by the wrong method of violence brought to very near perfection, Hitler has brutalized not only Germans but a large part of humanity. The end of it we have not yet reached. For Britain, so long as she holds to the orthodox method, has to copy the Nazi methods, if she is to put up a successful defence. Thus the logical outcome of the violent method seems to be increasingly to brutalize man including "the weak majority". For it has to give its defenders the required measure of co-operation.

Now imagine the same majority defended after the method of non-violence. As it admits of no grossness, no fraud, no malice, it must raise the moral tone of the defenders. Hence there will be a corresponding rise in the moral tone of the "weak majority" to be defended. No doubt there will be difference in degree, but not in kind.

But the snag comes in when we consider the ways and means of working the non-violent method. In working the other, there is no difficulty in getting the human material. Therefore that way seems easy. In getting non-violent defenders, we have to pick and choose. Money cannot buy them. The non-violent process is wholly different from the one commonly known. I can only say that my own experience in organizing non-violent action for half a century fills me with hope for the future. It has succeeded in a marked measure in protecting the "weak majority". But half a century is nothing in discovering the hidden possibilities of this force and working them out. Those, therefore, like the correspondent who are attracted to non-violence should, according to their ability and opportunity, join the experiment. It has entered upon a most interesting, though at the same time a most difficult, stage. I am myself sailing on uncharted waters. I have to take soundings every half-hour. The difficulty only braces me for the struggle.

Sevagram, 6-8-'40

*Harijan*, 11-8-1940

## IS NON-VIOLENCE IMPOSSIBLE?

"One may admit that in theory non-violence is an infallible weapon, and that no power on earth can be a match for the man who has achieved non-violence to the fullest extent. But is this possible? There may be a rare *yogi* who can tame wild beasts like lions and tigers and render them meek as lambs, but the average man must resort to a rifle or similar weapon to protect himself against such beasts. You with your wonderful power may convert others by the sheer force of your thought, but the average man has to have recourse to worldly remedies like a law court, pleaders and so on. Even in the dim and distant past we rarely hear of men who practised Ahimsa in daily affairs. Lord Buddha tried for a time to lead people along the path of Ahimsa, but what happened after him? Society went back to its old ways, forgetting Buddha's teaching. The past, therefore, offers little promise, for the future, of society going along the lines of Ahimsa any more than it has done before, and our sages, therefore, must have wisely left the world and resorted to the forest for practising truth and non-violence. You may inspire a few persons to study Ahimsa but society as a whole is not likely to take to it. The same argument applies to India as a nation. She must needs seek means other than those of Ahimsa in order to win her liberty. It is idle to expect an infant learning his primer to understand a book like Tilak's Gita. Even so is it idle to expect people steeped in worldly pleasures to understand the infallibility of Ahimsa. Besides Ahimsa is the final goal, attainment of which requires much greater preparation than is required in order to obtain a degree in medicine or engineering. We shall have to have numerous colleges and universities for the teaching of the science and art of truth and non-violence. Today society directs its energies to creating new wants and satisfying them. How do you expect it to turn those energies in the direction of researches in Ahimsa?"

The doubt and difficulties raised by this correspondent occur to others also, and I have on various occasions tried to solve them too. But when the Working Committee of the Congress has been instrumental in making of Ahimsa a live

issue, it seems necessary to deal with these doubts and difficulties at some length.

The correspondent doubts in substance the universal application of Ahimsa, and asserts that society has made little progress towards it. Teachers like Buddha arose and made some effort with some little success perhaps in their lifetime, but society is just where it was in spite of them.

The last statement is incorrect inasmuch as the Congress has adhered to non-violence as the means for the attainment of Swaraj. It has indeed gone a step further. The question having been raised as to whether non-violence continues to be the weapon against all internal disturbances, the A. I. C. C. clearly gave the answer in the affirmative. And then even on this matter there was a considerable body of the members of the A. I. C. C. who voted against the resolution. This dissent has got to be reckoned with when the question voted upon is one of principle. The Congress policy must always be decided by a majority vote, but it does not cancel the minority vote. It stands. When there is no principle involved and there is a programme to be carried out, the minority has got to follow the majority. But where there is a principle involved, the dissent stands, and it is bound to express itself in practice when the occasion arises.

Now for the argument that I am but a rare individual, and that what little society has done in the matter of Ahimsa is due to my influence, and that it is sure to disappear with me. This is not right. The Congress has a number of leaders who can think for themselves. The Maulana is a great thinker of keen intellect and vast reading. Few can equal him in his Arabic and Persian scholarship. Experience has taught him that Ahimsa alone can make India free. It was he who insisted on the resolution accepting Ahimsa as a weapon against internal disturbances. Pandit Jawaharlal is not a man to stand in awe of anyone. His study of history and contemporary events is second to none. It is after mature thought that he has accepted Ahimsa as a means for the attainment of Swaraj. It is true that he has said that he would not hesitate to accept Swaraj if non-violence failed and it could be won

by means of violence. But that is not relevant to the present issue. There are not a few other big names in the Congress who believe in Ahimsa as the only weapon at least for the attainment of Swaraj. To think that all of them will give up the way of Ahimsa as soon as I am gone, is to insult them and to insult human nature. We must believe that everyone can think for himself. Mutual respect to that extent is essential for progress. By crediting our companions with independent judgment we strengthen them and make it easy for them to be independent-minded even if they are proved to be weak.

If we turn our eyes to the time of which history has any record down to our own time, we shall find that man has been steadily progressing towards Ahimsa. Our remote ancestors were cannibals. Then came a time when they were fed up with cannibalism and they began to live on chase. Next came a stage when man was ashamed of leading the life of a wandering hunter. He therefore took to agriculture and depended principally on mother earth for his food. Thus from being a nomad he settled down to civilized stable life, founded villages and towns, and from member of a family he became member of a community and a nation. All these are signs of progressive Ahimsa and diminishing Himsa. Had it been otherwise, the human species should have been extinct by now, even as many of the lower species have disappeared.

Prophets and *avatars* have also taught the lesson of Ahimsa more or less. Not one of them has professed to teach Himsa. And how should it be otherwise? Himsa does not need to be taught. Man as animal is violent, but as Spirit is non-violent. The moment he awakes to the Spirit within he cannot remain violent. Either he progresses towards Ahimsa or rushes to his doom. That is why the prophets and *avatars* have taught the lessons of truth, harmony, brotherhood, justice, etc. — all attributes of Ahimsa.

And yet violence seems to persist, even to the extent of thinking people like the correspondent regarding it as the final weapon. But, as I have shown, history and experience are against him.



If we believe that mankind has steadily progressed towards Ahimsa, it follows that it has to progress towards it still further. Nothing in this world is static, everything is kinetic. If there is no progression, then there is inevitable retrogression. No one can remain without the eternal cycle, unless it be God Himself.

The present war is the saturation point in violence. It spells to my mind also its doom. Daily I have testimony of the fact that Ahimsa was never before appreciated by mankind as it is today. All the testimony from the West that I continue to receive points in the same direction. The Congress has pledged itself to Ahimsa however limited. I invite the correspondent and doubters like him to shed their doubts and plunge confidently into the sacred sacrificial fire of Ahimsa. Then I have little doubt that the Congress will retrace its step. "It is always willin'" Well has Pritam, our poet, sung:

Happiest are those that plunge in the fire,

The lookers-on are all but scorched by flames.

Sevagram, 5-8-'40

*Harijan*, 11-8-1940

### 53

## MORAL SUPPORT

A friend writes as follows:

"On the declaration of war you had advised giving moral support to Britain. Many persons never understood the implications of such support. You have never explained them either, so far as I know. I am a regular reader of *Harijanbandhu*, but I have not seen a clear explanation there. Everyone puts his own interpretation on the words. At the last sitting of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee the leaders said: 'Bapu was ready to give moral support to Britain. What else has the Congress done in its latest resolution? As a matter of fact, the Congress asks for more than it promises to give. Bapu was willing to give all for nothing.' If war is itself a wrong act, how can it deserve moral support or blessings? In the Mahabharata, was the help that Lord Krishna gave to Arjuna moral, or was it more destructive than the deadliest weapons of war?"

I did explain in *Harijan* what I meant by moral support. It is possible that the explanation did not appear in *Harijan-bandhu*. In my English writings things are often left to be understood. The ellipses need, however, to be brought out in translations.

Broadly speaking Britain could have had moral support from the Congress, if only she had acted justly towards India. There was no spirit of bargaining in my proposal because the help was not offered in exchange for anything.

Suppose my friend possesses moral strength which he has acquired through *tapasya*. And suppose I am in need of this strength. I shall not get it from him for the asking. He may always be ready to give it to me, but if I have not the capacity within me to take it from him, how shall I ever obtain it? Moral support cannot really be given in the sense of giving. It automatically comes to him who is qualified to take it. And such a one can take it in abundance.

The Congress has this moral reservoir. The acceptance of the creed of truth and non-violence has been its *tapasya*. It has acquired world prestige through the acceptance of truth and non-violence for the attainment of its goal. If the Congress could have given its blessings to Britain, the world would have adjudged Britain's cause to be just. The masses over whom the Congress holds sway would also have acknowledged justice to be on Britain's side. But in all this the Congress would have had nothing material to give. The British government would, by its own action, have acquired moral prestige or strength. Though the Congress would not give one man or one pice as material aid, its moral support and blessings would definitely have turned the scales in favour of Britain. This is my belief. That my belief may be groundless and that the Congress never had any moral prestige is quite possible. The determination of this question is unnecessary for my argument.

But the opportunity for rendering moral support now seems almost to have gone. The Congress felt itself unable to adopt my course. It cannot be taken mechanically. It presupposes a living faith in truth and non-violence. The greatest quality in the Congress is this that it has never

claimed to have what it really does not possess. And therefore its resolutions are dignified and carry force with them.

The help that the Congress in its latest resolution promises to give is material and for a consideration, eminently just, no doubt, but it is not and cannot be unconditional. I do not suggest that this position is either untenable or morally wrong. The resolution has dignity because it is the considered opinion of the majority. But by passing it the Congress has, in my opinion, surrendered the prestige it had or was supposed to have. Many Congressmen say that, while they firmly believed that they could attain Swaraj through non-violence, they had never meant it to be understood that they could retain it also through non-violence. The entire outside world, however, believed that the Congress was showing the golden way to the abolition of war. No one outside India ever dreamed that, if the Congress could wrest independence from a mighty power like Britain purely through non-violence, it would not be able to defend it also by the same means.

In my opinion Lord Krishna's help to Arjuna cannot be said to be moral, because he himself had an army and was an expert in the art of war. Duryodhana acted foolishly in that he asked for Krishna's army, while Arjuna got what he wanted in the person of the expert in the science of war. Therefore, if we interpret the Mahabharata literally, Lord Krishna's strength was certainly more destructive than that of his army. Because of his scientific skill Krishna was able, with an army of seven divisions, to destroy Duryodhana's army of eleven. But it is well-known that I have never looked upon the Mahabharata as a mere record of earthly warfare. In the garb of an epic the poet has described the eternal warfare within the individual as well as in society, between Truth and Untruth, Violence and Non-violence, Right and Wrong. Looking at the epic even superficially one can understand how the great Vyasa has demonstrated that in this war the victor was no better off than the vanquished. Out of that vast concourse of warriors only seven remained to tell the tale. And the poet gives a true picture of the woeful state of mind also of these seven. The author has shown

clearly too that in armed warfare the contending parties are certain to stoop to meanness and trickery. When occasion arose even the great Yudhishthira had to resort to untruth to save the battle.

One more question of the writer remains to be answered. If war is itself a wrong act, how can it be worthy of moral support or blessings? I believe all war to be wholly wrong. But if we scrutinize the motives of two warring parties, we may find one to be in the right and the other in the wrong. For instance, if A wishes to seize B's country, B is obviously the wronged one. Both fight with arms. I do not believe in violent warfare, but all the same, B, whose cause is just, deserves my moral help and blessings.

Sevagram, 12-8-'40

*Harijan*, 18-8-1940

## 54

### WHAT SHOULD A BRITON DO AND NOT DO?

*Q.* In your appeal to 'Every Briton' you say: "You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want. . . . You will give all your 'earthly possessions' but never your souls or your minds. . . . You will refuse to own allegiance to them." Please explain clearly what a Briton should or should not do. I ask the question because your answer will have a bearing on the duty of every Satyagrahi.

*A.* Not to yield your soul to the conqueror means that you will refuse to do that which your conscience forbids you to do. Suppose the 'enemy' were to ask you to rub your nose on the ground or to pull your ears or to go through such humiliating performances, you will not submit to any of these humiliations. But if he robs you of your possessions, you will yield them because as a votary of Ahimsa you have from the beginning decided that earthly possessions have nothing to do with your soul. That which you look upon as your own you may keep only so long as the world allows you to own it.

Not to yield your mind means that you will not give way to any temptation. Man is oftentimes weak-minded enough to be caught in the snare of greed and honeyed

words. We see this happening daily in our social life. A weak-minded man can never be a Satyagrahi. The latter's 'no' is invariably a 'no', and his 'yes' an eternal 'yes'. Such a man alone has the strength to be a devotee of truth and Ahimsa. But here one must know the difference between steadfastness and obstinacy. If after having said 'yes' or 'no' one finds out that the decision was wrong and in spite of that knowledge clings to it, that is obstinacy and folly. It is necessary to think things out carefully and thoroughly before coming to any decision.

The meaning of refusal to own allegiance is clear. You will not bow to the supremacy of the victor, you will not help him to attain his object. Herr Hitler has never dreamt of possessing Britain. He wants the British to admit defeat. The victor can then demand anything he likes from the vanquished, and the latter has perforce to yield. But if defeat is not admitted, the enemy will fight until he has killed his opponent. A Satyagrahi, however, is dead to his body even before the enemy attempts to kill him, i.e. he is free from attachment to his body and only lives in the victory of the soul. Therefore, when he is already thus dead, why should he yearn to kill anyone? To die in the act of killing is in essence to die defeated. Because, if the enemy is unable to get what he wants from you alive, he will decide to get it after killing you. If, on the other hand, he realizes that you have not the remotest thought in your mind of raising your hand against him even for the sake of your life, he will lack the zest to kill you. Every hunter has had this experience. No one has ever heard of anyone hunting cows.

You may find that I have not answered the questions that you had in your mind. I have made a humble effort and dealt with your general question by giving you a few homely examples. I hope that from them you will be able to deduce answers to the questions left unanswered.

Dignity of the soul and self-respect are interpreted differently by different persons. I am aware that self-respect is often misinterpreted. The over-sensitive man may see disrespect or hurt in almost every thing. Such a man does not really understand what self-respect is. That has been



my experience in many cases. But no harm accrues even if a non-violent man holds mistaken notions of self-respect. He can die cheerfully for the sake of what he believes to be his dignity and self-respect. Only he has no right to injure or kill the supposed wrong-doer.

Sevagram, 13-8-'40

*Harijan*, 18-8-1940

## 55

### AN INTERESTING DISCOURSE—I

#### **The Scope of Ahimsa**

The first question was about the limits and implications of Ahimsa and the extent of its applications. Should one stop with the human species or extend it to all creation?

Gandhiji said: "I was not prepared for this question. For the Congress Ahimsa is naturally confined to the political field and therefore only to the human species. Hence out-and-out non-violence means for our purpose every variety of non-violence on the political field. In concrete terms it covers family relations, relations with constituted authority, internal disorders and external aggression. Put in another way it covers all human relations."

"Then what about meat-eating and egg-eating? Do they consist with non-violence?"

"They do. Otherwise we should have to exclude Musalmans and Christians and a vast number of Hindus as possible co-workers in Ahimsa. I have known many meat-eaters to be far more non-violent than vegetarians."

"But what if we had to give them up for the sake of a principle?"

"Oh, yes, we would, if we had to compromise our principle. Our principle is defined as I have shown already."

#### **A Wrong Analogy**

"If, as you have said, Polish resistance to the German invasion was almost non-violent, and you would thus seem to reconcile yourself with it, why do you object to the Wardha resolution of the Working Committee?"

"Surely," said Gandhiji, "there is no analogy between the two cases. If a man fights with his sword single-handed against a horde of dacoits armed to the teeth, I should say he is fighting almost non-violently. Haven't I said to our women that, if in defence of their honour they used their nails and teeth and even a dagger, I should regard their conduct non-violent? She does not know the distinction between Himsa and Ahimsa. She acts spontaneously. Supposing a mouse in fighting a cat tried to resist the cat with his sharp beak, would you call that mouse violent? In the same way, for the Poles to stand valiantly against the German hordes vastly superior in numbers, military equipment and strength, was almost non-violence. I should not mind repeating that statement over and over again. You must give its full value to the word 'almost'. But we are 400 millions here. If we were to organize a big army and prepare ourselves to fight foreign aggression, how could we by any stretch of imagination call ourselves almost non-violent, let alone non-violent? The Poles were unprepared for the way in which the enemy swooped down upon them. When we talk of armed preparation, we contemplate preparation to meet any violent combination with our superior violence. If India ever prepared herself that way, she would constitute the greatest menace to world peace. For, if we take that path, we will also have to choose the path of exploitation like the European nations. That is why I still regret the moment when my words lacked the power of convincing the Sardar and Rajaji. By having passed that resolution we proclaimed to the world that the Ahimsa we had subscribed to all these years was not really Ahimsa but a form of Himsa."

### **Administering Non-violently**

**Q.** "How will you run your administration non-violently?"

**A.** "If you assume that we would have won independence by non-violent means, it means that the bulk of the country had been organized non-violently. Without the vast majority of people having become non-violent, we could not attain non-violent Swaraj. If, therefore, we attain

Swaraj by purely non-violent means, it should not be difficult for us to carry on the administration without the military. The goondas too will then have come under our control. If, for instance, in Sevagram we have five or seven goondas in a population of seven hundred who are non-violently organized, the five or seven will either live under the discipline of the rest or leave the village.

"But you will see that I am answering the question with the utmost caution, and my truth makes me admit that we might have to maintain a police force. But the police will be after our pattern, and not the British pattern. As we shall have adult suffrage, the voice of even the youngest of us will count. That is why I have said that the ideally non-violent State will be an ordered anarchy. That State will be the best governed which is governed the least. The pity is that no one trusts me with the reins of government! Otherwise I would show how to govern non-violently. If I maintain a police force, it will be a body of reformers."

"But," someone retorted, "you had the power in the Congress?"

"That was a paper-boat," said Gandhiji. "And then you must not forget that I never spared the Congress ministries. Munshi and Pantji came in for a lot of strictures from me. As I have said in another connection even the dirty water from the gutter, when it mixes with the water of the Ganges, becomes as pure as the Ganges water; even so I had expected even the goondas would work under Congress discipline. But evidently our ministers had not attained the purifying potency of the fabled Ganges."

"But," said Shri Kher, intervening at this stage, "the Congress ministers had no non-violent power with them. Even if 500 goondas had run amok and had been allowed to go unchecked, they would have dealt untold havoc. I do not know how even you would have dealt with them."

"Surely, surely," said Gandhiji, "I had rehearsed such situations. The ministers could on such occasions have gone out and allowed themselves to be done to death by the goondas. But let us face the fact that we had not the requisite Ahimsa. We went in with our half-baked Ahimsa. I do not

mind it, inasmuch as we gave up power the moment we felt we should give it up. I am sure that, if we had adhered to strictest non-violence during these two or three years, the Congress would have made a tremendous advance in the direction of Ahimsa and also independence."

"But," said Balasaheb, "four or five years ago when there was a riot, and I appealed to the leaders to go and throw themselves into the conflagration, no one was ready."

"So you are supporting my argument. You agree that our loyalty to Ahimsa was lip-loyalty and not heart-loyalty. And if even the half-baked Ahimsa carried us a long way, does it not follow that thorough Ahimsa would have carried us very far indeed, even if it had not already brought us to the goal?"

### **Non-violent Army**

"But we cannot visualize how you will stand non-violently against a foreign invasion."

"I cannot draw the whole picture to you because we have no past experience to fall back upon and there is no reality facing us today. We have got the government army manned by the Sikhs, Pathans and Gurkhas. What I can conceive is this that with my non-violent army of, say, two thousand people I should put myself between the two contending armies. But this, I know, is no answer. I can only say that we shall be able to reduce the invader's violence to a minimum. The general of a non-violent army has got to have greater presence of mind than that of a violent army, and God would bless him with the necessary resourcefulness to meet situations as they arise."

Shri Kher now raised a philosophical question. "The world," he said, "is made up of pairs of opposites. Where there is fear, there is courage too. When we walk on the edge of a precipice we walk warily, for we have fear. Fear is not a thing to despise. Will your non-violent army be above these pairs of opposites?"

"No," said Gandhiji, replying in the same philosophical terminology. "No, for the simple reason that my army will represent one of the pair — Ahimsa — out of the pair of Himsa and Ahimsa. Neither I nor my army is above the

pair of opposites. The state of *gunatita*, in the language of the Gita, rises above Himsa and Ahimsa both. Fear has its use, but cowardice has none. I may not put my finger into the jaws of a snake, but the very sight of the snake need not strike terror into me. The trouble is that we often die many times before death overtakes us.

"But let me explain what my army will be like. They need not and will not have the resourcefulness or understanding of the general, but they will have a perfect sense of discipline to carry out faithfully his orders. The general should have the quality which commands the unquestioning obedience of his army, and he will expect of them nothing more than this obedience. The Dandi March was entirely my conception: Pandit Motilalji first laughed at it; he thought it to be a quixotic adventure and Jannalalji suggested instead a march on the Viceroy's House! But I could not think of anything but the salt march as I had to think in terms of millions of our countrymen. It was a conception that God gave me. Pandit Motilalji argued for some time, and then he said he must not argue, as after all I was the general and he must have faith in me. Later when he saw me in Jambusar he was completely converted, for he saw with his own eyes the awakening that had come over the masses. And it was an almost magical awakening. Where in history shall we find parallels of the cool courage that our women displayed in such large numbers?

"And yet none of the thousands who took part in the movement were above the average. They were erring, sinning mortals. God has a way of making use of the most fragile instruments and remaining Himself untouched by everything. Only He is *gunatita*.

### **The Real Equipment**

"And then what after all is the army that wins? You know Rama's reply to Vibhishana when the latter wondered how Rama would be able to conquer a foe like Ravana, when he had no chariot, no armour, nor any shoes to his feet? Rama says:

"The chariot, my dear Vibhishana, that wins the victory for Rama is of a different sort from the usual one. Manliness and



courage are its wheels; unflinching truth and character its banners and standards; strength, discrimination, self-restraint and benevolence its horses, with forgiveness, mercy, equanimity their reins; prayer to God is that conqueror's unerring charioteer, dispassion his shield, contentment his sword, charity his axe, intellect his spear, and perfect science his stout bow. His pure and unwavering mind stands for a quiver, his mental quietude and his practice of *yama* and *niyama* stand for the sheaf of arrows, and the homage he pays to Brahmanas and his guru is his impenetrable armour. There is no other equipment for victory comparable to this; and, my dear friend, there is no enemy who can conquer the man who takes his stand on the chariot of Dharma. He who has a powerful chariot like this is a warrior who can conquer even that great and invincible enemy—the world. Hearken unto me and fear not."

"That is the equipment," added Gandhiji, "that can lead us to victory. I have not retired from the world, nor do I mean to. I am no recluse. I am content to do what little work I can in Sevagram and give what guidance I can to those that come to me. What we need is faith. And what is there to be lost in following the right path? The worst that can happen to us is that we shall be crushed. Better to be crushed than to be vanquished.

"But if we had to equip ourselves violently, I should be at my wit's end. I cannot even think out an armament plan, much less work it. On the other hand my non-violent plan is incredibly simpler and easier, and with God as our Commander and Infallible Guide where is there cause for any fear?"

Sevagram, 21-8-'40

*Harijan*, 25-8-1940

M. D.

## AN INTERESTING DISCOURSE — II

## A Sister's Questions

Q. "May a non-violent man possess wealth, and if he may, how can he keep it non-violently?"

A. "He may not own any wealth, though he may possess millions. Let him hold it in trust. If he lives among dacoits and thieves, he may possess very little, indeed little beyond a loin-cloth. And if he does this, he will convert them."

"But you must not generalize. In a non-violent State there will be very few dacoits. For the individual the golden rule is that he will *own* nothing. If I decided to settle and work among the so-called criminal tribes, I should go to them without any belongings and depend on them for my food and shelter. The moment they feel that I am in their midst in order to serve them, they will be my friends. In that attitude is true Ahimsa."

Q. "How is one to protect the honour of women?"

A. "I am afraid you do not read *Harijan* regularly. I discussed this question years ago, and have discussed it often since. The question may be discussed under two heads: (1) how is a woman to protect her own honour? and (2) how are her male relatives to protect it?"

"As regards the first question, where there is a non-violent atmosphere, where there is the constant teaching of Ahimsa, woman will not regard herself as dependent, weak or helpless. She is not really helpless when she is really pure. Her purity makes her conscious of her strength. I have always held that it is physically impossible to violate a woman against her will. The outrage takes place only when she gives way to fear or does not realize her moral strength. If she cannot meet the assailant's physical might, her purity will give her the strength to die before he succeeds in violating her. Take the case of Sita. Physically she was a weakling before Ravana, but her purity was more than a match even for his giant might. He tried to win

her with all kinds of allurements but could not carnally touch her without her consent. On the other hand, if a woman depends on her own physical strength or upon a weapon she possesses, she is sure to be discomfited whenever her strength is exhausted.

“The second question is easily answered. The brother or father or friend will stand between his protegee and her assailant. He will then either dissuade the assailant from his wicked purpose or allow himself to be killed by him in preventing him. In so laying down his life he will not only have done his duty, but given a new accession of strength to his protegee who will now know how to protect her honour.”

“But,” said one of the sisters from Poona, “there lies the rub. How is a woman to lay down her life? Is it possible for her to do so?”

“Oh !” said Gandhiji, “any day more possible for her than for man. I know that women are capable of throwing away their lives for a much lesser purpose. Only a few days ago a young girl of twenty burnt herself to death as she felt she was being persecuted for refusing to go in for ordinary studies. And she perished with such cool courage and determination! She ignited her sari with an ordinary oil-light and did not so much as raise a cry, so that the people in the neighbouring room were unaware of the happening until all was over. I do not give these details to commend her example, but to show how easily woman can throw away her life. I, at any rate, am incapable of this courage. But I agree that it is not the external light but the inner light that is needed.”

The same sister wondered how one was to avoid anger and violence altogether in dealing with children. “You know our old adage,” said Gandhiji laughing heartily, “Play with him till he is five, hammer him for ten years, treat him as your friend when he is sixteen.” “But,” he added, “don’t you worry. If you have to be angry with your child on occasions, I shall call that anger non-violent anger. I am speaking of wise mothers, not the ignorant ones who do not deserve to be mothers.”

### Central Teaching of the Gita

The discussion again took a serious turn with a challenging question on the philosophy of the Gita: "Is the central teaching of the Gita selfless action or non-violence?"

"I have no doubt that it is *anasakti* — selfless action. Indeed I have called my little translation of the Gita *Anasaktiyoga*. And *anasakti* transcends Ahimsa. He who would be *anasakta* (selfless) has necessarily to practise non-violence in order to attain the State of self-lessness. Ahimsa is, therefore, a necessary preliminary, it is included in *anasakti*, it does not go beyond it."

"Then does the Gita teach Himsa and Ahimsa both?"

"I do not read that meaning in the Gita. It is quite likely that the author did not write it to inculcate Ahimsa, but as a commentator draws innumerable interpretations from a poetic text, even so I interpret the Gita to mean that, if its central theme is *anasakti*, it also teaches Ahimsa. Whilst we are in the flesh and tread the solid earth, we have to practise Ahimsa. In the life beyond there is no Himsa or Ahimsa."

"But," said Balasaheb Kher, "Lord Krishna actually counters the doctrine of Ahimsa. For Arjuna utters this pacifist resolve:

'Better I deem it, if my kinsmen strike,  
To face them weaponless, and bare my breast  
To shaft and spear, than answer blow with blow.'

And Lord Krishna teaches him to answer blow with blow."

### What to Do ?

"There I join issue with you," said Gandhiji. "Those words of Arjuna were words of pretentious wisdom. 'Until yesterday,' says Krishna to him, 'You fought your kinsmen with deadly weapons without the slightest compunction. Even today you would strike if the enemy was a stranger and not your own kith and kin!' The question before him was not of non-violence, but whether he should slay his nearest and dearest."

Again the questioners came down to solid earth, and began to put questions about the Congress and the attitude

of those who believed in complete non-violence. Gandhiji explained that they should refrain till he gave the word. He wanted still to plead with the leaders who had passed the Poona resolution. He expected to show them that the Congress would lose all its prestige if they adhered to the new policy. But the question had to be dealt with patiently. On the other hand it did not matter even if the Congress resolution received no response. The resolution was as good as enforced, when it was deliberately passed, and their duty did not alter with refusal of the government to respond. "Besides," he added, "there is an inherent flaw in the Poona resolution. It should be obvious to the meanest understanding that, if you think that you cannot do without arms in meeting foreign aggression, they would *a fortiori* be needed in dealing with daily disturbances — internecine feuds, dacoities and riots. For organized unarmed resistance against an organized invasion is any day easier than deliberate Ahimsa in face of a dacoit who breaks into your house at night. That calls for Ahimsa of the highest type."

Sevagram, 26-8-'40

M. D.

*Harijan*, 1-9-1940

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### HOW TO QUENCH IT?

Elsewhere in these columns the reader will see "A Seeker's" letter\* in which he has asked a question which

\*"A Seeker's" Question

The Editor, *Harijan*

Sir,

You must be reading in the papers how the war between Germany and England is being waged. Aeroplanes filled with thousands of incendiary bombs do untold havoc, and newspapers and broadcasts describe with pleasure the amount of injury each side is able to inflict on the other. The general public is consoled by being told that the damage done in the enemy country is greater than what the enemy has done in theirs. It is said that military objectives are the sole targets of the raiders: but it is impossible to believe that, flying at great heights and often through smoke screens, the bombers can really take proper



must have occurred to everyone. The beauty lies in the way in which he has introduced the question. He has depicted the present conflagration in such lurid colours that violence cannot but stink in our nostrils. The reader is sure instinctively to exclaim: "Even if it were possible to win the kingdom of the world by means of such violence, I would not have it."

But this exclamation will be of no avail to quench the conflagration. No doubt it will some day quench itself but it means mutual fratricidal slaughter like that of the Yadavas of old who destroyed themselves and relieved the earth of so much burden. And such a consummation would any day be preferable to a perpetual conflagration. But no one would wish for this. What one would devoutly wish for is some brave step to stop the conflagration before there is total destruction. This can only be a non-violent step. How and when it can be taken has to be discovered. The "Seeker" will be satisfied when the discovery is made. In my opinion the discovery has already been made. If India can win Swaraj non-violently even while this conflagration is going on, the latter is bound to be extinguished by that one event.

We read in our religious books that whenever, in the days of old, all ordinary means failed to secure release from an ordeal or a calamity, people resorted to *tapasya* (penance), i. e., actually burnt themselves. I do not regard these stories as legendary. *Tapasya* is of various kinds. Misguided aim. And then we hear from both sides of the 'successful' blockades, the object of which is to spread famine; and famine must necessarily, more than even bombs, hurt the civilian population.

Is it impossible for these belligerents to think in terms of humanity and stop this carnage? How can any good ever come out of war? And must we not, therefore, declare ourselves unreservedly against war for or against anybody or any ideology?

There must be many godly people in the warring countries who think in this way but have not the strength to raise their voice in protest. May we not help them to do so and at the same time rouse the sleeping conscience of all thinking people?

Yours,  
A Seeker

men can resort to it, as we find them doing today. The wise also can do it. It is worth while understanding the implication of *tapasya*. It was by dint of *tapasya* that Western scientists made their discoveries. *Tapasya* does not simply consist of betaking oneself to the forest and sitting down there surrounded by blazing fires. That *tapasya* may even be the height of folly. We have, therefore, to discriminate.

The question asked by "A Seeker" does not arise out of despair. It is intended to quicken the conscience of those who believe in Ahimsa. I have already shown the way. It is the fulfilment of the thirteenfold constructive programme\* described in a recent article. Those who will carry it out in faith, in full knowledge, and without the slightest fuss, will have done their share in the *tapasya* to quench the conflagration. They will achieve two ends at the same time. They will make India free, and will also quench the conflagration. It is likely that the number of such people is limited, so limited that it can have no effect. I have maintained that, even if there is one individual who is almost completely non-violent, he can put out the conflagration. But I have suggested a *tapasya* which can easily be performed by the average individual. In this age of democracy it is essential that desired results are achieved by the collective effort of the people. It will no doubt be good to achieve an objective through the effort of a supremely powerful individual, but it can never make the community conscious of its corporate strength. An individual's success will be like a millionaire doling free food to millions of starving people. We should, therefore, bend our energies to a fulfilment of the thirteenfold constructive programme. It may or may not bring Swaraj, but we shall surely have the satisfaction of having done our best.

There is a warning in the "Seeker's" letter to which I should like to draw the reader's attention. He says papers and broadcasts describe with devilish pleasure the amount of injury each is able to inflict upon the other, and suggests

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\* *Constructive Programme*, reprint of second revised, enlarged edition. Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad-14.

that such news should sicken people instead of providing pleasure, if they are to take part in the propagation of peace. I agree. Such people will not be able to carry out even the constructive programme, for they will have no faith in it.

However that may be, it is as clear as daylight that, if this conflagration is to be put out through non-violent effort, it will be done only by India.

Sevagram, 2-9-'40

*Harijan*, 8-9-1940

## 58

### NOT MECHANICAL

Unlimited Ahimsa will take time to be universalized. We will have ample cause to congratulate ourselves, if we learn to substitute the law of love in society for that of the jungle, and if, instead of harbouring ill-will and enmity in our bosoms against those whom we regard as our enemies, we learn to love them as actual and potential friends. It should be remembered too that mere *jivadaya* (kindness to animals) does not enable us to overcome the 'Six deadly enemies' within us, namely lust, anger, greed, infatuation, pride and falsehood. Give me the man who has completely conquered self and is full of goodwill and love towards all, and is ruled by the law of love in all his actions, and I for one will offer him my respectful homage even though he be a meat-eater. On the other hand the *jivadaya* of a person who is steeped in anger and lust but daily feeds the ants and insects and refrains from killing has hardly anything in it to recommend itself. It is a mechanical performance without any spiritual value. It may even be worse — a hypocritical screen for hiding the corruption within.

Sevagram, 9-9-'40

*Harijan*, 15-9-1940

## SOME CRITICISM ANSWERED

I must say why I think that the warring nations do not know what they are fighting for. I had used the expression 'Warring nations', not 'peoples of Europe'. This is not a distinction without a difference. I have distinguished between the nations and their leaders. The leaders of course know what they are fighting for. I make no admission that they are right. But neither the English nor the Germans nor the Italians know what they are fighting for except that they trust their leaders and therefore follow them. I submit that this is not enough when the stake is so bloody and staggering as during the present war. It is perhaps common cause that Germans and Italians do not know why English children should be slaughtered in cold blood and beautiful English homes should be destroyed. When I asked the British soldiers in South Africa during the Boer War they could not tell me what they were fighting for. 'Theirs' was surely 'not to reason why'. They did not even know where they were being marched to. The British people would not be able to give me a more satisfying answer, if I happened to be in London and asked them why their soldiers were working havoc in Berlin. If the press accounts are to be relied upon, British skill and valour have wrought more havoc in Berlin than have the Germans in London. What wrong have the German people done to the British people? Their leaders have. Hang them by all means, but why destroy German homes and German civilian life? What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty or democracy? I assert in all humility, but with all the strength at my command, that liberty and democracy become unholy when their hands are dyed red with innocent blood. I hear the living Christ saying: "These so-called children of mine know not what they are doing. They take my Father's name in vain, for they

disobey the central command of my Father!" If my ears do not deceive, I have erred in good company, if I have erred at all.

And why have I uttered the truth? Because I am confident that God has made me the instrument of showing the better way. If Britain seeks justice, she must appear before the imperial court of God with clean hands. She will not defend liberty and democracy by following totalitarian methods so far as war is concerned. She will not be able to retrace her steps after out-Hitlering Hitler in war. The last war is a resounding lesson. Her victory, if attained, will be a snare and a delusion. I know mine is a voice in the wilderness. But it will some day ring true. If liberty and democracy are to be truly saved, they will only be by non-violent resistance no less brave, no less glorious, than violent resistance. And it will be infinitely braver and more glorious because it will give life without taking any.

On the way to Simla, 25-9-'40

*Harijan*, 29-9-1940

## 60

### TO ADOLF HITLER

[The letter reproduced below was written by Gandhiji in the Christmas week of 1941, but the Government of India would not allow it to be transmitted to the Nazi dictator.]

Dear Friend,

That I address you as a friend is no formality. I own no foes. My business in life has been for the past thirty-three years to enlist the friendship of the whole humanity by befriending mankind, irrespective of race, colour or creed.

I hope you will have the time and desire to know how a good portion of humanity who have been living under the influence of that doctrine of universal friendship view your actions. We have no doubt about your bravery or devotion to your fatherland, nor do we believe that you are the monster described by your opponents. But your own writings and pronouncements and those of your friends and



admirers leave no room for doubt that many of your acts are monstrous and unbecoming of human dignity, especially in the estimation of men like me who believe in universal friendliness. Such are your humiliation of Czechoslovakia, the rape of Poland and the swallowing of Denmark. I am aware that your view of life regards such spoliations as virtuous acts. But we have been taught from childhood to regard them as acts degrading humanity. Hence we cannot possibly wish success to your arms. But ours is a unique position. We resist British Imperialism no less than Nazism. If there is a difference, it is in degree. One-fifth of the human race has been brought under the British heel by means that will not bear scrutiny. Our resistance to it does not mean harm to the British people. We will convert them, not defeat them on the battlefield. Ours is an unarmed revolt against the British rule. But whether we convert them or not we are determined to make their rule impossible by non-violent non-co-operation. It is a method in its nature undefeatable. It is based on the knowledge that no spoliator can compass his end without a certain degree of co-operation, willing or compulsory, of the victim. Our rulers can have our land and bodies, but not our souls. They can have the former only by destruction of every Indian, man, woman, and child. That all may not rise to that degree of heroism and that a fair amount of frightfulness can bend the back of the revolt is true, but the argument would be beside the point. For, if a fair number of men and women can be found in India who would be prepared without any ill-will against the spoliators to lay down their lives rather than bend the knee to them, they would have shown the way to freedom from the tyranny of violence. I ask you to believe me when I say that you will find an unexpected number of such men and women in India. They have been having that training for the past twenty years.

We have been trying for the past half a century to throw off the British rule. The movement of independence has been never so strong as now. The most powerful political organization, I mean the Indian National Congress, is trying to achieve this end.

We have attained a very fair measure of success through non-violent effort. We are groping for the right means to combat the most organized violence in the world, which the British power represents. You have challenged it. It remains to be seen which is the better organized, the German or the British.

We know what the British heel means for us and the non-European races of the world. But we would never wish to end British rule with German aid. We have found in non-violence a force which, if organized, can without doubt match itself against a combination of all the most violent forces in the world. In non-violent technique, as I have said, there is no such thing as defeat. It is all "do or die" without killing or hurting. It can be used practically without money and obviously without the aid of the science of destruction, which you have brought to such perfection.

It is a marvel to me that you do not see it is nobody's monopoly. If not the British, some other power will certainly improve upon your method and beat you with your own weapon. You are leaving no legacy to your people of which they would feel proud. They cannot take pride in a recital of cruel deeds, however skilfully planned.

I, therefore, appeal to you in the name of humanity to stop the war. You will lose nothing by referring all the matters of dispute between you and Great Britain to an International Tribunal of your joint choice. If you attain success in the war, it will not prove that you were in the right. It will only prove that your power of destruction was greater, whereas an award, by an impartial tribunal, will show as far as it is humanly possible, which party was in the right.

You know that not long ago I made an appeal to every Briton to accept my method of non-violent resistance. I did it because the British know me as a friend, though a rebel. I am a stranger to you and your people. I have not the courage to make to you the appeal I made to every Briton. Not that it would not apply to you with the same force as to the British. But my present proposal is much simpler because it is much more practical and familiar.

During this season when the hearts of the peoples of Europe yearn for peace, we have suspended even our peaceful struggle. Is it too much to ask you to make an effort for peace during a time which may mean nothing to you personally, but must mean much to the millions of Europeans, whose dumb cry for peace I hear, for my ears are attuned to hearing the dumb millions? I had the privilege of meeting Signor Mussolini when I was in Rome during my visit to England as a delegate to the Round Table Conference. I hope he will take this as addressed to him also with the necessary changes.

*I am,*  
*Yours sincere friend,*  
 M. K. GANDHI

*This Was Bapu, (Ed. 1959), pp. 155-58*

## 61

## A DEPLORABLE INCIDENT

As Sardar Vallabhbhai was leaving Sevagram the other day he told me of a dacoity in a home in Kheda District. Armed dacoits entered the house, belaboured the inmates, and escaped with the loot. The story was heart-rending. What should I do under similar circumstances, I thought to myself. What should Congressmen do in the circumstances was the next thought; and since then the train of thought arising from the dacoity has taken possession of me. The Congress has been working continuously since 1920 under the policy of non-violence. The province of Gujarat has also had the advantage of a leader of the Sardar's calibre. And yet daring dacoities can take place. How far then can Congress influence be said to have penetrated? People imagine that, if the British Government were to cease to function today, it would be the non-violent Congressmen who would automatically take over. But it is not so. I have been working to this end for the last twenty years, but my dream has not materialized. For the Congress has not had a living faith in the very means which it adopted in 1920. Therefore the non-violence of the Congress has really been non-violence of the weak. But governments

can only be run by the strong. And a non-violent government can only be run by those who believe that non-violence is the mightiest force on earth. If we had had this strength, there would be no Hindu-Muslim riots, there would be no robbers or dacoits. Some might say that for such strength you need either a Jesus or a Buddha. But this is not so. Neither Jesus nor Buddha tried non-violence in the political sphere, or it would be truer to say that the present-day type of politics did not exist in their day. The Congress experiment is, therefore, a new one. The tragedy is that Congressmen have not tried it with full faith, full understanding and sincerity. If they had had these three essential qualities, the Congress would today have been far taller than it is. But I may not cry over spilt milk. I refer to the past only in order to guide us in the present. Even if we wake up now, the game is ours; if we do not, we shall surely lose. Power invariably elects to go into the hands of the strong. That strength may be physical or of the heart, or, if we do not fight shy of the word, of the spirit. Strength of the heart connotes soul force. If today we decide that we should try to get power by force of arms, we shall have to undo all the work of twenty years among the masses. We shall have to spend a considerable time in giving people a contrary training. We cannot afford to give the required time at this critical juncture. It is certain that today whoever has any strength of any kind will use it for seizing power. It is my firm conviction that, if Congressmen are to get power, it should only be through non-violence or soul force.

We have neither time nor material to do new work even in this line. When we have so far employed non-violence as a weapon of the weak, how can we all of a sudden expect to convert it into a weapon of the strong? But in spite of this I feel that at the present moment this experiment alone is feasible and proper for us. There is no risk involved in it. Even failure in it takes the form of success because, even if the people are not able to go the whole length in the experiment, they cannot possibly be led into a ditch. By following the way of physical force they may not only be proved cowards, but in attempting to follow

an untrodden path thousands may also be destroyed.

It is then the duty of Congressmen to seek out dacoits and robbers. They should try to understand and convert them. Such workers cannot be had for the asking; but Congressmen should know that this work is just as important as it is fraught with risk, and a certain number of them have to devote themselves to it.

The second thing requisite is that we should prepare such workers as would, under difficult circumstances, stand up to dacoits and, whilst trying to check or convert them from their evil ways, be prepared to suffer hurt or even death. Perhaps few workers will be forthcoming for this task too, but peace brigades throughout the country are a definite necessity. Or else in times of chaos Congressmen will lose all the reputation they have so far gained.

Thirdly, the rich should ponder well as to what is their duty today. They who employ mercenaries to guard their wealth may find those very guardians turning on them. The moneyed classes have got to learn how to fight either with arms or with the weapon of non-violence. For those who wish to follow the latter way the best and most effective *mantram* is: तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः । (Enjoy thy wealth by renouncing it). Expanded it means: "Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society." This truth has hitherto not been acted upon; but, if the moneyed classes do not even act on it in these times of stress, they will remain the slaves of their riches and passions and consequently of those who overpower them.

But I have visions that the end of this war will mean also the end of the rule of capital. I see coming the day of the rule of the poor, whether that rule be through force of arms or of non-violence. Let it be remembered that physial force is transitory even as the body is transitory. But the power of the spirit is permanent, even as the spirit is everlasting.

Sevagram, 25-1-'42

*Harijan*, 1-2-1942



## CRIMINAL ASSAULTS

The whole world is on trial today. No one can escape from the war. Whilst the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are products of poets' imagination, their authors were not mere rhymesters. They were seers. What they depicted is happening before our very eyes today. Ravana's are warring with each other. They are showing matchless strength. They throw their deadly weapons from the air. No deed of bravery in the battlefield is beyond their capacity or imagination.

Man would not fight in this manner, certainly not the gods. Only brutes can. Soldiers drunk with the pride of physical strength loot shops and are not even ashamed to take liberties with women. The administration is powerless in war time to prevent such happenings. The army fulfils their primary need, and they wink the eye at their misdeeds. Where a whole nation is militarized the way of military life becomes part and parcel of its civilization. Therefore a soldier's taking such liberties is not a matter for condemnation. But it would take generations for India to become so.

Hence arise questions like the following which a sister sends me:

"(1) If a soldier commits an assault on a woman, can she be said to have lost her virtue?

(2) Is such a woman to be condemned and ostracized by society?

(3) What should women and the public do under such circumstances?"

Whilst the woman has in point of fact lost her virtue, the loss cannot in any way render her liable to be condemned or treated as an outcast. She is entitled to our sympathy for she has been cruelly injured, and we should tend her wounds as we would those of any injured person.

A woman is worthy of condemnation only when she is a willing party to her dishonour. In no case are adultery

and criminal assault synonymous terms. If we were to view the matter in this light, we would not hide such instances as has thus far been our wont. Public opinion against such conduct on the part of men towards women would then be created and freely exercised.

If the press carried on a sustained agitation, soldiers white or brown would probably cease to behave in this manner. Their officers would be compelled to prevent such misbehaviour.

My advice to women is that they should leave the cities and migrate to the villages where a wide field of service awaits them. There is comparatively little risk of their being assaulted in villages. They must, however, live simple lives and make themselves one with the poor. If they will display their wealth by dressing in silks and satins and wearing jewellery, they will, in running away from one danger, expose themselves to a double. Naturally the advice cannot refer to those whom duty compels to live in cities.

The main thing, however, is for women to know how to be fearless. It is my firm conviction that a fearless woman who knows that her purity is her best shield can never be dishonoured. However beastly the man, he will bow in shame before the flame of her dazzling purity. There are examples even in modern times of women who have thus defended themselves. I can, as I write, recall two such instances. I therefore recommend women who read this article to try to cultivate this courage. They will become wholly fearless, if they can and cease to tremble as they do today at the mere thought of assaults. It is not, however, necessary for a woman to go through a bitter experience for the sake of passing of test of courage. These experiences mercifully do not come in the way of lakhs or even thousands. Every soldier is not a beast. It is a minority that loses all sense of decency. Only twenty per cent of snakes are poisonous, and out of these a few only bite. They do not attack unless trodden on. But this knowledge does not help those who are full of fear and tremble at the sight of a snake. Parents and husbands should, therefore, instruct women in the art of becoming fearless. It can

best be learnt from a living faith in God. Though He is invisible, He is one's unfailing protector. He who has this faith is the most fearless of all.

But such faith or courage cannot be acquired in a day. Meantime we must try to explore other means. When a woman is assaulted she may not stop to think in terms of Himsa or Ahimsa. Her primary duty is self-protection. She is at liberty to employ every method or means that come to her mind in order to defend her honour. God has given her nails and teeth. She must use them with all her strength and, if need be, die in the effort. The man or woman who has shed all fear of death will be able not only to protect himself or herself but others also through laying down his life. In truth we fear death most, and hence we ultimately submit to superior physical force. Some will bend the knee to the invader, some will resort to bribery, some will crawl on their bellies or submit to other forms of humiliation, and some women will even give their bodies rather than die. I have not written this in a carping spirit. I am only illustrating human nature. Whether we crawl on our bellies or whether a woman yields to the lust of man is symbolic of that same love of life which makes us stoop to anything. Therefore only he who loses his life shall save it; तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः । Every reader should commit this matchless *shloka* to memory. But mere lip loyalty to it will be of no avail. It must penetrate deep down to the innermost recesses of his heart. To enjoy life one should give up the lure of life. That should be part of our nature.

So much for what a woman should do. But what about a man who is witness to such crimes? The answer is implied in the foregoing. He must not be a passive onlooker. He must protect the woman. He must not run for police help; he must not rest satisfied by pulling the alarm chain in the train. If he is able to practise non-violence, he will die in doing so and thus save the woman in jeopardy. If he does not believe in non-violence or cannot practise it, he must try to save her by using all the force he may have. In either way there must be readiness on his part to lay down his life.

If old, decrepit and toothless, as I am, I were to plead non-violence and be a helpless witness of assault on the honour of a sister, my so-called Mahatmaship would be ridiculed, dishonoured and lost. If I or those like me were to intervene and lay down our lives whether violently or non-violently, we would surely save the prey and at any rate we would not remain living witnesses to her dishonour.

So much about the witnesses. But if the courageous spirit pervades the entire atmosphere of our country and it is known that no Indian will stand women being assaulted, I venture to say that no soldier will dare to touch them. That such a spirit does not exist is a matter of shame for us. But it will be something, if persons ready to wipe out this blot are forthcoming.

Those who have influence with the Government will try to get the authorities to take the necessary action. But self-help is best help. In the present circumstances we may rely only on our strength and God's help.

On the train to Wardha, 19-2-'42

*Harijan*, 1-3-1942

## 63

## ON ITS TRIAL

"I am a pacifist still in one sense; that is to say, I realize that Christians should be able to meet material force with spiritual power. It is horrifying to reflect that after nineteen hundred years, we are still unable to do it except in individual cases and on a small scale. But to me it seems merely 'wishful thinking' to act as though we had a power which in fact we have not and for which we have neither trained nor disciplined ourselves in the past. Such power does not come to those who have not disciplined themselves, at the last moment, in the hour of need. It has not come to us. I would rather, therefore, do what I can in defence of principles which I believe to be both right in themselves and of enormous importance to the future of the human race, than stand aside and do nothing. It is doing nothing that is the worst expedient of all.

When, therefore, my pacifist friends ask me whether I can imagine Jesus Christ dropping a bomb or firing a gun I am

entitled to reply: 'No, I cannot; but neither can I imagine him standing aside and doing nothing at all.'

I am compelled to echo the words of a very dear relative of mine who, loathing war as much as any pacifist that ever breathed, said to me at the beginning of the last war, (in which he lost his life) 'If you can stop war with spiritual power, do it. If you can't, let me do what I can; and if you are right in thinking that war is so damnable that anyone who takes part in it is damned, then I would rather be damned than let these things go on without doing all I can to stop them, even at the cost of my own life.'

Is this not very close to the meaning of our Lord when he said: 'He that loseth his life shall save it'?"

The foregoing is the concluding portion of a touchingly sorrowful article contributed to *The Survey Graphic* of December 1941 by the celebrated Dr. Maude Royden of the Guildhouse, London. She is one of the foremost pacifists of the West. Like many she has felt compelled to revise her position and is now most reluctantly but fully ranged on the side of the defenders of the British Isles.

The article demands a considered reply. I have been in constant touch with the Western pacifists. In my opinion Dr. Royden has surrendered her position in the portion I have quoted. If individuals have lived up to the Christian teaching (i.e., on non-violence) and that on a small scale, one would think practice should make such a life possible for many people and on a large scale. It is undoubtedly wrong and foolish "to act as though one had the power which in fact one has not". "But," says the worthy writer, "such power does not come to those who have not disciplined themselves, at the last moment, in the hour of need."

I suggest that with the knowledge of the defect no time should be lost in seeking to remove it. That by itself is doing not only something but the right thing. To deny one's faith by contrary practice is surely the worst thing one can do.

And I am not sure that "doing nothing is the worst expedient of all". In septic treatment, for instance, doing nothing is not only expedient, it is obligatory.



There is no cause whatsoever for despondency, much less for denial of one's faith at the crucial moment. Why should not British pacifists stand aside and remodel their life in its entirety? They might be unable to bring about peace outright, but they would lay a solid foundation for it and give the surest test of their faith. When, in the face of an upheaval such as we are witnessing, there are only a few individuals of immovable faith, they have to live up to their faith even though they may produce no visible effect on the course of events. They should believe that their action will produce tangible results in due course. Their staunchness is bound to attract sceptics. I would also suggest that individuals like Dr. Maude Royden are not mere camp followers. They are leaders. Therefore, they have to live their lives in strict accord with the Sermon on the Mount, and they will find immediately that there is much to give up and much to remodel. The greatest thing that they have to deny themselves is the fruit of imperialism. The present complicated life of the Londoner and his high living is possible only because of the hoards brought from Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. In spite of the fierce criticism which has been levelled against my letter 'To Every Briton', I adhere to every word of it, and I am convinced that posterity will adopt the remedy suggested therein against violence however organized and fierce. And now that the enemy is at the gates of India, I am advising my countrymen the same course of action I advised the British people. My advice may or may not be accepted by my countrymen. I would remain unmoved. Their non-acceptance will be no test of failure of non-violence. I would subscribe to the charge of my imperfection. But a Satyagrahi does not wait for perfection before he invites others to experiment with him, provided always that his faith is immovable like a mountain. The advice that Dr. Royden's relative gave her and which she quotes approvingly is altogether wrong. If the war is damnable, how can he stop the things that go on by taking part in it, even though it may be on the defensive side and at the cost of his own life? For the defence has to resort to all the damnable things that the enemy

does, and that with greater vigour if it has to succeed. Such a giving of life is not only not saving it but a mere waste.

I have attended the Doctor's services in her Church where a living belief in the efficacy of prayer is much in vogue. When the impenetrable gloom surrounded her, why did she not find strength and consolation and real action in heart-prayer? It is never too late to mend. She and her fellow-pacifists, many of whom I have the privilege of knowing should take heart and, like Peter, repent of the momentary loss of faith and return to the old faith in non-violence with renewed vigour. Their return will mean no material loss to the war effort but will mean a great deal to the anti-war effort which is bound to succeed sooner rather than later, if man is to live as man and not become a two-footed brute.

Sevagram, 8-3-'42

*Harijan*, 15-3-1942

## 64

## 'SCORCHED EARTH'

The Russian technique of scorched earth has staggered humanity, but humanity has been powerless to do anything except applaud the amazing sacrifice and bravery that counted no cost too great to circumvent the enemy. I have shared the amazement with the admirers but not their admiration.

We like to imitate what we admire. Now that the prospect faces us, are we able to contemplate with equanimity, or feel the glow of bravery and sacrifice at, the prospect of India's earth being scorched and everything destroyed in order that the enemy's march may be hampered?

As a war resister my answer can only be one. I see neither bravery nor sacrifice in destroying life or property for offence or defence. I would far rather leave, if I must, my crops and homestead for the enemy to use than destroy them for the sake of preventing their use by him. There is

reason, sacrifice and even bravery in so leaving my homestead and crops, if I do so not out of fear but because I refuse to regard anyone as my enemy—that is, out of a humanitarian motive.

But in India's case there is, too, a practical consideration. Unlike Russia's, India's masses have no national instinct developed in the sense that Russia's have. India is not fighting. Her conquerors are. Supposing that the conquerors are worsted and the Japanese come, the inarticulate masses will not even notice the change for the time being or for a long time. The intelligentsia are divided on the issue of the war. The motive here is irrelevant. India's soldiers are in no sense a national army. They are soldiers because it is their profession. They will as soon fight under the Japanese or any other provided they are paid for fighting. In these circumstances the policy of scorched earth would be a wholly indefensible act.

(The reader should not miss) the conditional expression "if I must". I have imagined a state of things in which I am not prepared just now to die and therefore I want to retreat in an orderly manner in the hope of resisting under other and better auspices. The thing to consider here is not resistance but non-destruction of food crops and the like. Resistance, violent or non-violent, has to be well thought out. Thoughtless resistance will be regarded as bravado in military parlance, and violence or folly in the language of non-violence. Retreat itself is often a plan of resistance and may be a precursor of great bravery and sacrifice. Every retreat is not cowardice which implies fear to die. Of course a brave man would more often die in violently or non-violently resisting the aggressor in the latter's attempt to oust him from his property, but he will be no less brave if wisdom dictates present retreat.

Sevagram, 16-3-'42 and 7-4-'42

*Harijan*, 22-3-1942 and 12-4-1942

## INHUMAN IF TRUE

The Honorary Secretary of the Social Service Department of the Marwadi Relief Society writes:

"I have to place before you a very brief review of the activities of the Marwadi Relief Society, Calcutta, in connection with rendering relief to evacuees from Burma and Malaya, absolutely irrespective of caste, creed and colour, and also to humbly seek your invaluable advice on a very grave matter. The Society has undertaken to provide food, medical aid, and facilities for repatriation to thousands of helpless refugees who are arriving in Calcutta daily by rail, road and sea. Several emergent cases of delivery have also been attended to. The Society is also trying to secure suitable jobs for unemployed evacuees with the kind co-operation of respectable local firms.

In this connection I beg to report a certain very regrettable incident to you, and shall be grateful if you kindly advise me as to my duties in the matter.

On the night of the 14th March, shortly after the arrival of the Chittagong Mail, as I, in company with a number of volunteers, was attending to the wants of the evacuees, a British Tommy got hold of a small child belonging to one of the poor evacuees and threw it under the train. Although I am a humble follower of your noble creed of non-violence, it was with the greatest difficulty that I restrained myself and my volunteers from punishing the soldier bodily for his brutal act. I reported the matter to the station military authorities, but their attitude was anything but sympathetic. I later approached Mr. K. C. Sen I.C.S. over the matter, and though he promised to duly enquire into the matter, nothing has been done as yet to rectify it. There are still large numbers of soldiers loitering about the platforms every night, and a violent clash between these soldiers and relief volunteers and the public is a possibility which has to be tackled in no time. I have already placed the matter before the Bengal Congress Civil Protection Committee.

I should be thankful, if you kindly advised me on the following points:

1. Should I start an agitation in the press over the matter?

2. Supposing a soldier behaves indecently towards a helpless female evacuee, are we to put up with it silently, or should the soldier be forcibly dealt with?

It would help us very greatly, if you kindly issue a statement in *Harijan* in this connection. I am prepared to accept all responsibility regarding the truthfulness of the above incident."

I have suppressed many letters giving me authentic details about the misbehaviour of soldiers. I have published them when it would have been wrong, if not cowardly, to suppress them. The letter in question demands, in my opinion, the widest publicity, not merely for the safety of the public but also for the sake of the soldiers and the Government. The Marwadi Relief Society is a big philanthropic institution of twenty-five years' standing having an all-India reputation. It has funds and seasoned workers. Its prestige should have been enough security for the good behaviour of the soldiers in the presence of its workers. The soldier must have run amuck or been under the influence of drink to have behaved as he is reported to have done. I trust that the Marwadi Relief Society will not leave the matter till it is thoroughly thrashed out; and I trust too that the authorities will not wish to hush up the matter but will make ample amends, if the case is proved as reported by my correspondent.

So much for the case itself. The correspondent desires my guidance about similar cases in future. The action of Himsa or Ahimsa would have been identical. The volunteers should have, if they could, bodily prevented the soldier from touching the child or snatched the child from him, even if the soldier had been hurt in the act of preventing or snatching. The proceedings after the delivery of the child or the failure of the attempt would vary according as the deliverers were actuated violently or non-violently. Non-violent behaviour would dictate generous and gentle behaviour towards the culprit. But generosity and gentleness would have to be thoughtful and reasoned. It is difficult to lay down in advance the rule of conduct applicable in all cases. I can say this much that a truly generous act demands sincere recognition on the part of the culprit. I have known instances of Africans in South



Africa insulted at railway stations saying to the rude white men, "My brother, God will forgive you for your rudeness", and the white men giggling, if not adding injury to insult. In similar circumstances I have myself remained silent and suffered the insult. I am quite clear that the Africans' so-called generosity was a mere mechanical act justly evoking derision. Mine was timidity. I did not wish to evoke further insult. I certainly did not want to take legal proceedings. I was trying then to shape my non-violent conduct.

I have interpolated an examination of so-called non-violent conduct in cases of personal insult or injury. What about the child injured or the injury imagined by my correspondent? I think non-violent conduct would not, should not, be different. The distinction that is often drawn between personal injury and injury done to wards is unjustified, if not wrong. A man is not expected to do more for his wards than he would for himself. He would no doubt sacrifice himself for his ward's honour, but he would be expected to do likewise for his own. If he did otherwise, he would be voted a coward and is not likely to protect his ward's honour, if he is not able to protect his own. But I own that correct non-violent conduct does not come through mere reasoning. Reason is a necessary preliminary. But correctness of conduct will come only through repeated practice, may be even repeated failures.

What violent conduct should be surely needs no examination.

Sevagram, 23-3-'42

*Harijan*, 29-3-1942

## NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

Japan is knocking at our gates. What are we to do in a non-violent way? If we were a free country, things could be done non-violently to prevent the Japanese from entering the country. As it is, non-violent resistance could commence the moment they effected a landing. Thus non-violent resisters would refuse them any help, even water. For it is no part of their duty to help anyone to steal their country. But if a Japanese had missed his way and was dying of thirst and sought help as a human being, a non-violent resister, who may not regard anyone as his enemy, would give water to the thirsty one. Suppose the Japanese compel resisters to give them water, the resisters must die in the act of resistance. It is conceivable that they will exterminate all resisters. The underlying belief in such non-violent resistance is that the aggressor will, in time, be mentally and even physically tired of killing non-violent resisters. He will begin to search what this new (for him) force is which refuses co-operation without seeking to hurt, and will probably desist from further slaughter. But the resisters may find that the Japanese are utterly heartless and that they do not care how many they kill. The non-violent resisters will have won the day inasmuch as they will have preferred extermination to submission.

But things will not happen quite so simply as I have put them. There are at least four parties in the country. First, the British and the army they have brought into being. The Japanese declare that they have no designs upon India. Their quarrel is only with the British. In this they are assisted by some Indians who are in Japan. It is difficult to guess how many, but there must be a fairly large number who believe in the declaration of the Japanese and think that they will deliver the country from the British yoke and retire. Even if the worst happens, their fatigue of the British yoke is so great that they would even welcome the Japanese yoke for a change. This is the second party. The third are the neutrals, who though not non-violent will help neither the British nor the Japanese.

The fourth and last are non-violent resisters. If they are only a few, their resistance will be ineffective except as an example for the future. Such resisters will calmly die wherever they are but will not bend the knee before the aggressor. They will not be deceived by promises. They do not seek deliverance from the British yoke through the help of a third party. They believe implicitly in their own way of fighting and no other. Their fight is on behalf of the dumb millions who do not perhaps know that there is such a thing as deliverance. They have neither hatred for the British nor love for the Japanese. They wish well to both as to all others. They would like both to do what is right. They believe that non-violence alone will lead men to do right under all circumstances. Therefore, if for want of enough companions non-violent resisters cannot reach the goal, they will not give up their way but pursue it to death.

The task before the votaries of non-violence is very difficult. But no difficulty can baffle men who have faith in their mission.

This is going to be a long drawn out agony. Let non-violent resisters not make impossible attempts. Their powers are limited. A resister in Kerala is not physically responsible for the defence of Assam which is just now in imminent danger. If Assam is non-violently inclined, it is well able to take care of itself. If it is not, no party of non-violent resisters from Kerala can help it or any other province. Kerala can help Assam etc. by demonstrating its non-violence in Kerala itself. The Japanese army, if it gets a foothold in India, will not stop at Assam. In order to defeat the British, it has to overrun the whole country. The British will fight every inch of the ground. Loss of India will probably be admission of complete defeat for them. But whether it is so or not, it is quite clear that Japan will not rest till India is wholly in her hands. Hence non-violent resisters must remain at their posts wherever they are.

One thing has to be made clear. Where the British army is actually engaging the 'enemy', it would be perhaps improper for direct resistance to function. It will not be

non-violent resistance when it is mixed with, or allies itself to, violence.

Let me therefore reiterate what I have said so often. The best preparation for, and even the expression of, non-violence lies in the determined pursuit of the constructive programme. Anyone who believes that without the backing of the constructive programme he will show non-violent strength when the testing time comes will fail miserably. It will be, like the attempt of a starving unarmed man to match his physical strength against a fully fed and panoplied soldier, foredoomed to failure. He who has no belief in the constructive programme has, in my opinion, no concrete feeling for the starved millions. He who is devoid of that feeling cannot fight non-violently. In actual practice the expansion of my non-violence has kept exact pace with that of my identification with starved humanity. I am still far from the non-violence of my conception, for am I not still far away from the identification of my conception with dumb humanity?

On the train to Wardha, 5-4-'42

*Harijan*, 12-4-1942

## 67

## TO EVERY JAPANESE

I must confess at the outset that, though I have no ill-will against you, I intensely dislike your attack upon China. From your lofty height you have descended to imperial ambition. You will fail to realize that ambition and may become the authors of the dismemberment of Asia, thus unwittingly preventing world federation and brotherhood without which there can be no hope for humanity.

Ever since I was a lad of eighteen studying in London over fifty years ago, I learnt, through the writings of the late Sir Edwin Arnold, to prize the many excellent qualities of your nation. I was thrilled when in South Africa I learnt of your brilliant victory over Russian arms. After my return to India from South Africa in 1915, I came in close touch with Japanese monks who lived as members of

our Ashram from time to time. One of them became a valuable member of the Ashram in Sevagram, and his application to duty, his dignified bearing, his unflinching devotion to daily worship, affability, unruffledness under varying circumstances, and his natural smile which was positive evidence of his inner peace had endeared him to all of us. And now that owing to your declaration of war against Great Britain he has been taken away from us, we miss him as a dear co-worker. He has left behind him as a memory his daily prayer and his little drum, to the accompaniment of which we open our morning and evening prayers.

In the background of these pleasant recollections I grieve deeply as I contemplate what appears to me to be your unprovoked attack against China and, if reports are to be believed, your merciless devastation of the great and ancient land.

It was a worthy ambition of yours to take equal rank with the Great Powers of the world. Your aggression against China and your alliance with the Axis Powers was surely an unwarranted excess of that ambition.

I should have thought that you would be proud of the fact that that great and ancient people, whose old classical literature you have adopted as your own, are your neighbours. Your understanding of one another's history, tradition, literature should bind you as friends rather than make you the enemies you are today.

If I was a free man, and if you allowed me to come to your country, frail though I am, I would not mind risking my health, may be my life, to come to your country to plead with you to desist from the wrong you are doing to China and the world and therefore to yourself.

But I enjoy no such freedom. And we are in the unique position of having to resist an imperialism that we detest no less than yours and Nazism. Our resistance to it does not mean harm to the British people. We seek to convert them. Ours is an unarmed revolt against British rule. An important part in the country is engaged in a deadly but friendly quarrel with the foreign rulers.



But in this they need no aid from foreign Powers. You have been gravely misinformed, as I know you are, that we have chosen this particular moment to embarrass the Allies when your attack against India is imminent. If we wanted to turn Britain's difficulty into our opportunity we should have done it as soon as the war broke out nearly three years ago.

Our movement demanding the withdrawal of the British power from India should in no way be misunderstood. In fact, if we are to believe your reported anxiety for the independence of India, a recognition of that independence by Britain should leave you no excuse for any attack on India. Moreover the reported profession sorts ill with your ruthless aggression against China.

I would ask you to make no mistake about the fact that you will be sadly disillusioned if you believe that you will receive a willing welcome from India. The end and aim of the movement for British withdrawal is to prepare India, by making her free for resisting all militarist and imperialist ambition, whether it is called British Imperialism, German Nazism, or your pattern. If we do not, we shall have been ignoble spectators of the militarization of the world in spite of our belief that in non-violence we have the only solvent of the militarist spirit and ambition. Personally I fear that without declaring the independence of India the Allied Powers will not be able to beat the Axis combination which has raised violence to the dignity of a religion. The Allies cannot beat you and your partners unless they beat you in your ruthless and skilled warfare. If they copy it, their declaration that they will save the world for democracy and individual freedom must come to naught. I feel that they can only gain strength to avoid copying your ruthlessness by declaring and recognizing *now* the freedom of India, and turning sullen India's forced co-operation into freed India's voluntary co-operation.

To Britain and the Allies we have appealed in the name of justice, in proof of their professions, and in their own self-interest. To you I appeal in the name of humanity. It is a marvel to me that you do not see that ruthless warfare is nobody's monopoly. If not the Allies some other

Power will certainly improve upon your method and beat you with your own weapon. Even if you win you will leave no legacy to your people of which they would feel proud. They cannot take pride in a recital of cruel deeds however skilfully achieved.

Even if you win it will not prove that you were in the right, it will only prove that your power of destruction was greater. This applies obviously to the Allies too, unless they perform *now* the just and righteous act of freeing India as an earnest and promise of similarly freeing all other subject peoples in Asia and Africa.

Our appeal to Britain is coupled with the offer of Free India's willingness to let the Allies retain their troops in India. The offer is made in order to prove that we do not in any way mean to harm the Allied cause, and in order to prevent you from being misled into feeling that you have but to step into the country that Britain has vacated. Needless to repeat that if you cherish any such idea and will carry it out, we will not fail in resisting you with all the might that our country can muster. I address this appeal to you in the hope that our movement may even influence you and your partners in the right direction and deflect you and them from the course which is bound to end in your moral ruin and the reduction of human beings to robots.

The hope of your response to my appeal is much fainter than that of response from Britain. I know that the British are not devoid of a sense of justice and they know me. I do not know you enough to be able to judge. All I have read tells me that you listen to no appeal but to the sword. How I wish that you are cruelly misrepresented and that I shall touch the right chord in your heart! Any way I have an undying faith in the responsiveness of human nature. On the strength of that faith I have conceived the impending movement in India, and it is that faith which has prompted this appeal to you.

*I am,*

*Your friend and well-wisher,*

M. K. GANDHI

Sevagram, 18-7-'42

*Harijan*, 26-7-1942

## FASTING IN NON-VIOLENT ACTION

If the struggle which we are seeking to avoid with all our might has to come, and if it is to remain non-violent as it must in order to succeed, fasting is likely to play an important part in it. It has its place in the tussle with authority and with our own people in the event of wanton acts of violence and obstinate riots for instance.

There is a natural prejudice against it as part of a political struggle. It has a recognized place in religious practice. But it is considered a vulgar interpolation in politics by the ordinary politician though it has always been resorted to by prisoners in a haphazard way with more or less success. By fasting, however, they have always succeeded in drawing public attention and disturbing the peace of jail authorities.

My own fasts have always, as I hold, been strictly according to the law of Satyagraha. Fellow Satyagrahis too in South Africa fasted partially or wholly. My fasts have been varied. There was the Hindu-Muslim unity fast of 21 days in 1924 started under the late Maulana Mahomed Ali's roof in Delhi. The indeterminate fast against the MacDonald Award was taken in the Yeravda Prison in 1932. The 21 days' purificatory fast was begun in the Yeravda Prison and was finished at Lady Thakersey's, as the Government would not take the burden of my being in the prison in that condition. Then followed another fast in the Yeravda Prison in 1933 against the Government refusal to let me carry on anti-untouchability work through *Harijan* (issued from prison) on the same basis as facilities had been allowed me four months before. They would not yield, but they discharged me when their medical advisers thought I could not live many days if the fast was not given up. Then followed the ill-fated Rajkot fast in 1939. A false step taken by me thoughtlessly during that fast thwarted the brilliant result that would otherwise certainly have been achieved. In spite of all these fasts, fasting has not

been accepted as a recognized part of Satyagraha. It has only been tolerated by the politicians. I have however been driven to the conclusion that fasting unto death is an integral part of Satyagraha programme, and it is the greatest and most effective weapon in its armoury under given circumstances. Not every one is qualified for undertaking it without a proper course of training.

I may not burden this note with an examination of the circumstances under which fasting may be resorted to and the training required for it. Non-violence in its positive aspect as benevolence ( I do not use the word love as it has fallen into disrepute) is the greatest force because of the limitless scope it affords for self-suffering without causing or intending any physical or material injury to the wrong-doer. The object always is to evoke the best in him. Self-suffering is an appeal to his better nature, as retaliation is to his baser. Fasting under proper circumstances is such an appeal *par excellence*. If the politician does not perceive its propriety in political matters, it is because it is a novel use of this very fine weapon.

To practise non-violence in mundane matters is to know its true value. It is to bring heaven upon earth. There is no such thing as the other world. All worlds are one. There is no 'here' and no 'there'. As Jeans has demonstrated, the whole universe including the most distant stars, invisible even through the most powerful telescope in the world, is compressed in an atom. I hold it therefore to be wrong to limit the use of non-violence to cave dwellers and for acquiring merit for a favoured position in the other world. All virtue ceases to have use if it serves no purpose in every walk of life. I would therefore plead with the purely political-minded people to study non-violence and fasting as its extreme manifestation with sympathy and understanding.

Sevagram, 20-7-'42

*Harijan*, 26-7-1942

## THE 'QUIT INDIA' RESOLUTION

## I

[Gandhiji addressed the A.I.C.C. at Bombay on 8-8-'42 outlining his plan of action, in Hindustani as follows:]

"Before you discuss the resolution, let me place before you one or two things. I want you to understand two things very clearly and to consider them from the same point of view from which I am placing them before you. I ask you to consider it from my point of view, because if you approve of it, you will be enjoined to carry out all I say. It will be a great responsibility. There are people who ask me whether I am the same man that I was in 1920, or whether there has been any change in me. You are right in asking that question.

"Let me, however, hasten to assure you that I am the same Gandhi as I was in 1920. I have not changed in any fundamental respect. I attach the same importance to non-violence that I did then. If at all, my emphasis on it has grown stronger. There is no real contradiction between the present resolution and my previous writings and utterances.

"Occasions like the present do not occur in everybody's and but rarely in anybody's life. I want you to know and feel that there is nothing but purest Ahimsa in all that I am saying and doing today. The draft resolution of the Working Committee is based on Ahimsa, the contemplated struggle similarly has its roots in Ahimsa. If, therefore, there is any among you who has lost faith in Ahimsa or is wearied of it, let him not vote for this resolution.

"Let me explain my position clearly. God has vouchsafed to me a priceless gift in the weapon of Ahimsa. I and my Ahimsa are on our trial today. If in the present crisis, when the earth is being scorched by the flames of Himsa and crying for deliverance, I failed to make use of the God given talent, God will not forgive me and I shall be judged unworthy of the great gift. I must act now. I may not hesitate and merely look on, when Russia and China are threatened."



He emphasized: "Ours is not a drive for power, but purely a non-violent fight for India's independence. In a violent struggle, a successful general has been often known to effect a military coup and to set up a dictatorship. But under the Congress scheme of things, essentially non-violent as it is, there can be no room for dictatorship. A non-violent soldier of freedom will covet nothing for himself, he fights only for the freedom of his country. The Congress is unconcerned as to who will rule, when freedom is attained. The power, when it comes, will belong to the people of India, and it will be for them to decide to whom it should be entrusted. May be that the reins will be placed in the hands of the Parsis, for instance — as I would love to see happen — or they may be handed to some others whose names are not heard in the Congress today. It will not be for you then to object saying, 'This community is microscopic. That party did not play its due part in the freedom's struggle; why should it have all the power?' Ever since its inception the Congress has kept itself meticulously free of the communal taint. It has thought always in terms of the whole nation and has acted accordingly . . .

"I know how imperfect our Ahimsa is and how far away we are still from the ideal, but in Ahimsa there is no final failure or defeat. I have faith, therefore, that if, in spite of our shortcomings, the big thing does happen, it will be because God wanted to help us by crowning with success our silent, unremitting *sadhana* for the last twenty-two years."

"I believe," he said, "that in the history of the world, there has not been a more genuinely democratic struggle for freedom than ours. I read Carlyle's *French Revolution* while I was in prison, and Pandit Jawaharlal has told me something about the Russian revolution. But it is my conviction that inasmuch as these struggles were fought with the weapon of violence they failed to realize the democratic ideal. In the democracy which I have envisaged, a democracy established by non-violence, there will be equal freedom for all. Everybody will be his own master. It is to join a struggle for such democracy that I

invite you today. Once you realize this you will forget the differences between the Hindus and Muslims, and think of yourselves as Indians only, engaged in the common struggle for independence."

Concluding his speech, Gandhiji said:

"Then, there is the question of your attitude towards the British. I have noticed that there is hatred towards the British among the people. The people say they are disgusted with their behaviour. The people make no distinction between British imperialism and the British people. To them, the two are one. This hatred would even make them welcome the Japanese. It is most dangerous. It means that they will exchange one slavery for another. We must get rid of this feeling. Our quarrel is not with the British people, we fight their imperialism. The proposal for the withdrawal of British power did not come out of anger. It came to enable India to play its due part at the present critical juncture. It is not a happy position for a big country like India to be merely helping with money and material obtained willynilly from her while the United Nations are conducting the war. We cannot evoke the true spirit of sacrifice and valour, so long as we do not feel that it is our war, so long as we are not free. I know the British Government will not be able to withhold freedom from us, when we have made enough self-sacrifice. We must, therefore, purge ourselves of hatred. Speaking for myself, I can say that I have never felt any hatred. As a matter of fact, I feel myself to be a greater friend of the British now than ever before. One reason is that they are today in distress. My very friendship, therefore, demands that I should try to save them from their mistakes. As I view the situation, they are on the brink of an abyss. It, therefore, becomes my duty to warn them of their danger even though it may, for the time being, anger them to the point of cutting off the friendly hand that is stretched out to help them. People may laugh, nevertheless that is my claim. At a time when I may have to launch the biggest struggle of my life, I may not harbour hatred against anybody."

## II

[Gandhiji's address before the A.I.C.C. at Bombay on 8-8-'42 delivered in Hindustani.]

"I congratulate you on the resolution that you have just passed. I also congratulate the three comrades on the courage they have shown in pressing their amendments to a division, even though they knew that there was an overwhelming majority in favour of the resolution, and I congratulate the thirteen friends who voted against the resolution. In doing so, they had nothing to be ashamed of. For the last twenty years we have tried to learn not to lose courage even when we are in a hopeless minority and are laughed at. We have learned to hold on to our beliefs in the confidence that we are in the right. It behoves us to cultivate this courage of conviction, for it ennoble man and raises his moral stature. I was, therefore, glad to see that these friends had imbibed the principle which I have tried to follow for the last fifty years and more.

"Having congratulated them on their courage, let me say that what they asked this committee to accept through their amendments was not the correct representation of the situation. These friends ought to have pondered over the appeal made to them by the Maulana to withdraw their amendments; they should have carefully followed the explanations given by Jawaharlal. Had they done so, it would have been clear to them that the right which they now want the Congress to concede has already been conceded by the Congress.

"Time was when every Musلمان claimed the whole of India as his motherland. During the years that the Ali brothers were with me, the assumption underlying all their talks and discussions was that India belonged as much to the Musalmans as to the Hindus. I can testify to the fact that this was their innermost conviction and not a mask; I lived with them for years. I spent days and nights in their company. And I make bold to say that their utterances were the honest expression of their beliefs. I know there are some who say that I take things too readily at their face value, that I am gullible. I do not think I am such

a simpleton, nor am I so gullible as these friends take me to be. But their criticism does not hurt me. I should prefer to be considered gullible rather than deceitful.

"What these communist friends proposed through their amendments is nothing new. It has been repeated from thousands of platforms. Thousands of Musalmans have told me, that if Hindu-Muslim question was to be solved satisfactorily, it must be done in my lifetime. I should feel flattered at this; but how can I agree to a proposal which does not appeal to my reason? Hindu-Muslim unity is not a new thing. Millions of Hindus and Musalmans have sought after it. I consciously strove for its achievement from my boyhood. While at school, I made it a point to cultivate the friendship of Muslim and Parsi co-students. I believed even at that tender age that the Hindus in India, if they wished to live in peace and amity with the other communities, should assiduously cultivate the virtue of neighbourliness. It did not matter, I felt, if I made no special effort to cultivate the friendship with Hindus, but I must make friends with at least a few Musalmans. It was as counsel for a Musalman merchant that I went to South Africa. I made friends with other Musalmans there, even with the opponents of my client, and gained a reputation for integrity and good faith. I had among my friends and co-workers Muslims as well as Parsis. I captured their hearts and when I left finally for India, I left them sad and shedding tears of grief at the separation.

"In India too I continued my efforts and left no stone unturned to achieve that unity. It was my life-long aspiration for it that made me offer my fullest co-operation to the Musalmans in the Khilafat movement. Muslims throughout the country accepted me as their true friend.

"How then is it that I have now come to be regarded as so evil and detestable? Had I any axe to grind in supporting the Khilafat movement? True, I did in my heart of hearts cherish a hope that it might enable me to save the cow. I am a worshipper of the cow. I believe the cow and myself to be the creation of the same God, and I am prepared to sacrifice my life in order to save the cow. But, whatever my philosophy of life and my ultimate

hopes, I joined the movement in no spirit of bargain. I co-operated in the struggle for the Khilafat solely in order to discharge my obligation to my neighbour who, I saw, was in distress. The Ali brothers, had they been alive today, would have testified to the truth of this assertion. And so would many others bear me out in that it was not a bargain on my part for saving the cow. The cow like the Khilafat, stood on her own merits. As an honest man, a true neighbour and a faithful friend, it was incumbent on me to stand by the Musalmans in the hour of their trial.

"In those days, I shocked the Hindus by dining with the Musalmans, though with the passage of time they have now got used to it. Maulana Bari told me, however, that though he would insist on having me as his guest, he would not allow me to dine with him, lest some day he should be accused of a sinister motive. And so, whenever I had occasion to stay with him, he called a Brahmana cook and made special arrangements for separate cooking. Firangi Mahal, his residence, was an old-styled structure with limited accommodation; yet he cheerfully bore all hardships and carried out his resolve from which I could not dislodge him. It was the spirit of courtesy, dignity and nobility that inspired us in those days. The members of each community vied with one another in accommodating members of sister communities. They respected one another's religious feelings, and considered it a privilege to do so. Not a trace of suspicion lurked in anybody's heart. Where has all that dignity, that nobility of spirit, disappeared now? I should ask all Musalmans, including Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah, to recall those glorious days and to find out what has brought us to the present impasse. Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah himself was at one time a Congressman. If today the Congress has incurred his wrath, it is because the canker of suspicion has entered his heart. May God bless him with long life, but when I am gone, he will realize and admit that I had no designs on Musalmans and that I had never betrayed their interests. Where is the escape for me, if I injure their cause or betray their interests? My life is entirely at their disposal. They are free



to put an end to it, whenever they wish to do so. Assaults have been made on my life in the past, but God has spared me till now, and the assailants have repented for their action. But if someone were to shoot me in the belief that he was getting rid of a rascal, he would kill not the real Gandhi, but the one that appeared to him a rascal.

"To those who have been indulging in a campaign of abuse and vilification I would say, 'Islam enjoins you not to revile even an enemy. The Prophet treated even enemies with kindness and tried to win them over by his fairness and generosity. Are you followers of that Islam or of any other? If you are followers of the true Islam, does it behove you to distrust the words of one who makes a public declaration of his faith? You may take it from me that one day you will regret the fact that you distrusted and killed one who was a true and devoted friend of yours.' It cuts me to the quick to see that the more I appeal and the more the Maulana importunes, the more intense does the campaign of vilification grow. To me, these abuses are like bullets. They can kill me, even as a bullet can put an end to my life. You may kill me. That will not hurt me. But what of those who indulge in abusing? They bring discredit to Islam. For the fair name of Islam, I appeal to you to resist this unceasing campaign of abuse and vilification.

"Maulana Saheb is being made a target for the filthiest abuse. Why? Because he refuses to exert on me the pressure of his friendship. He realizes that it is a misuse of friendship to seek to compel a friend to accept as truth what he knows is an untruth.

"To the Quaid-i-Azam I would say: 'Whatever is true and valid in the claim for Pakistan is already in your hands. What is wrong and untenable is in nobody's gift, so that it can be made over to you. Even if someone were to succeed in imposing an untruth on others, he would not be able to enjoy for long the fruits of such a coercion. God dislikes pride and keeps away from it. God would not tolerate a forcible imposition of an untruth.'

"The Quaid-i-Azam says that he is compelled to say bitter things but that he cannot help giving expression

to his thoughts and his feelings. Similarly I would say: I consider myself a friend of Musalmans. Why should I then not give expression to the things nearest to my heart, even at the cost of displeasing them? How can I conceal my innermost thoughts from them? I should congratulate the Quaid-i-Azam on his frankness in giving expression to his thoughts and feelings, even if they sound bitter to his hearers. But even so why should the Musalmans sitting here be reviled, if they do not see eye to eye with him? If millions of Musalmans are with you can you not afford to ignore the handful of Musalmans who may appear to you to be misguided? Why should one with the following of several millions be afraid of a majority community, or of the minority being swamped by the majority? How did the Prophet work among the Arabs and the Musalmans? How did he propagate Islam? Did he say he would propagate Islam only when he commanded a majority? I appeal to you for the sake of Islam to ponder over what I say. There is neither fair play nor justice in saying that the Congress must accept a thing, even if it does not believe in it and even if it goes counter to principles it holds dear.

"Rajaji said: 'I do not believe in Pakistan. But Musalmans ask for it, Mr. Jinnah asks for it, and it has become an obsession with them. Why not then say "yes" to them just now? The same Mr. Jinnah will later on realize the disadvantages of Pakistan and will forgo the demand.' I said: 'It is not fair to accept as true a thing which I hold to be untrue, and ask others to do so in the belief that the demand will not be pressed when the time comes for settling it finally. If I hold the demand to be just, I should concede it this very day. I should not agree to it merely in order to placate Jinnah Saheb. Many friends have come and asked me to agree to it for the time being to placate Mr. Jinnah, disarm his suspicions and to see how he reacts to it. But I cannot be party to a course of action with a false promise. At any rate, it is not my method.'

"The Congress has no sanction but the moral one for enforcing its decisions. It believes that true democracy

can only be the outcome of non-violence. The structure of a world federation can be raised only on a foundation of non-violence, and violence will have to be totally abjured from world affairs. If this is true, the solution of Hindu-Muslim question, too, cannot be achieved by a resort to violence. If the Hindus tyrannize over the Musalmans, with what face will they talk of a world federation? It is for the same reason that I do not believe in the possibility of establishing world peace through violence as the English and American statesmen propose to do. The Congress has agreed to submitting all the differences to an impartial international tribunal and to abide by its decisions. If even this fairest of proposals is unacceptable, the only course that remains open is that of the sword, of violence. How can I persuade myself to agree to an impossibility? To demand the vivisection of a living organism is to ask for its very life. It is a call to war. The Congress cannot be party to such a fratricidal war. Those Hindus who, like Dr. Moonje and Shri Savarkar, believe in the doctrine of the sword may seek to keep the Musalmans under Hindu domination. I do not represent that section. I represent the Congress. You want to kill the Congress which is the goose that lays golden eggs. If you distrust the Congress, you may rest assured that there is to be perpetual war between the Hindus and the Musalmans, and the country will be doomed to continue warfare and bloodshed. If such warfare is to be our lot, I shall not live to witness it.

"It is for that reason that I say to Jinnah Saheb, 'You may take it from me that whatever in your demand for Pakistan accords with considerations of justice and equity is lying in your pocket; whatever in the demand is contrary to justice and equity you can take only by the sword and in no other manner.'

"There is much in my heart that I would like to pour out before this assembly. One thing which was uppermost in my heart I have already dealt with. You may take it from me that it is with me a matter of life and death. If we Hindus and Musalmans mean to achieve a heart unity, without the slightest mental reservation on the part of either, we must first unite in the effort to

be free from the shackles of this empire. If Pakistan after all is to be a portion of India, what objection can there be for Musalmans against joining this struggle for India's freedom? The Hindus and Musalmans must, therefore, unite in the first instance on the issue of fighting for freedom. Jinnah Saheb thinks the war will last long. I do not agree with him. If the war goes on for six months more, how shall we be able to save China?

"I, therefore, want freedom immediately, this very night, before dawn, if it can be had. Freedom cannot now wait for the realization of communal unity. If that unity is not achieved, sacrifices necessary for it will have to be much greater than would have otherwise sufficed. But the Congress must win freedom or be wiped out in the effort. And forget not that the freedom which the Congress is struggling to achieve will not be for the Congressmen alone but for all the forty crores of the Indian people. Congressmen must for ever remain humble servants of the people.

"The Quaid-i-Azam has said that the Muslim League is prepared to take over the rule from the Britishers if they are prepared to hand it over to the Muslim League, for the British took over the empire from the hands of the Muslims. This, however, will be Muslim Raj. The offer made by Maulana Saheb and by me does not imply establishment of Muslim Raj or Muslim domination. The Congress does not believe in the domination of any group or any community. It believes in democracy which includes in its orbit Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Parsis, Jews—every one of the communities inhabiting this vast country. If Muslim Raj is inevitable, then let it be; but how can we give it the stamp of our assent? How can we agree to the domination of one community over the others?

"Millions of Musalmans in this country come from Hindu stock. How can their homeland be any other than India? My eldest son embraced Islam some years back. What would his homeland be—Porbandar or the Punjab? I ask the Musalmans: 'If India is not your homeland, what other country do you belong to? In what separate homeland would you put my son who embraced Islam?'



His mother wrote him a letter after his conversion, asking him if he had on embracing Islam given up drinking which Islam forbids to its followers. To those who gloated over the conversion, she wrote to say: 'I do not mind his becoming a Musalman, so much as his drinking. Will you, as pious Musalmans, tolerate his drinking even after his conversion? He has reduced himself to the state of a rake by drinking. If you are going to make a man of him again, his conversion will have been turned to good account. You will, therefore, please see that he as a Musalman abjures wine and woman. If that change does not come about, his conversion goes in vain and our non-co-operation with him will have to continue.'

"India is without doubt the homeland of all the Musalmans inhabiting this country. Every Musalman should therefore co-operate in the fight for India's freedom. The Congress does not belong to any one class or community; it belongs to the whole nation. It is open to Musalmans to take possession of the Congress. They can, if they like, swamp the Congress by their numbers, and can steer it along the course which appeals to them. The Congress is fighting not on behalf of the Hindus but on behalf of the whole nation, including the minorities. It would hurt me to hear of a single instance of a Musalman being killed by a Congressman. In the coming revolution, Congressmen will sacrifice their lives in order to protect the Musalman against a Hindu's attack and *vice versa*. It is a part of their creed, and is one of the essentials of non-violence. You will be expected on occasions like these not to lose your heads. Every Congressman, whether a Hindu or a Musalman, owes this duty to the organization to which he belongs. The Musalman who will act in this manner will render a service to Islam. Mutual trust is essential for success in the final nation-wide struggle that is to come.

"I have said that much greater sacrifices will have to be made this time in the wake of our struggle because of the opposition from the Muslim League and from Englishmen. You have seen the secret circular issued by Sir Frederick Puckle. It is a suicidal course that he has taken. It contains an open incitement to organizations which corp



up like mushrooms to combine to fight the Congress. We have thus to deal with an empire whose ways are crooked. Ours is a straight path which we can tread even with our eyes closed. That is the beauty of Satyagraha.

"In Satyagraha, there is no place for fraud or falsehood, or any kind of untruth. Fraud and untruth today are stalking the world. I cannot be a helpless witness to such a situation. I have travelled all over India as perhaps nobody in the present age has. The voiceless millions of the land saw in me their friend and representative, and I identified myself with them to an extent it was possible for a human being to do. I saw trust in their eyes, which I now want to turn to good account in fighting this empire upheld on untruth and violence. However gigantic the preparations that the empire has made, we must get out of its clutches. How can I remain silent at this supreme hour and hide my light under the bushel? Shall I ask the Japanese to tarry awhile? If today I sit quiet and inactive, God will take me to task for not using up the treasure He had given me, in the midst of the conflagration that is enveloping the whole world. Had the condition been different, I should have asked you to wait yet awhile. But the situation now has become intolerable, and the Congress has no other course left for it.

"Nevertheless, the actual struggle does not commence this moment. You have only placed all your powers in my hands. I will now wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. That process is likely to take two or three weeks. What would you do in the meanwhile? What is the programme, for the interval, in which all can participate? As you know, the spinning wheel is the first thing that occurs to me. I made the same answer to the Maulana. He would have none of it, though he understood its import later. The fourteenfold constructive programme is, of course, there for you to carry out. What more should you do? I will tell you. Every one of you should, from this moment onwards, consider yourself a free man or woman, and act as if you are free and are no longer under the heel of this imperialism.

"It is not a make-believe that I am suggesting to you. It is the very essence of freedom. The bond of the slave is snapped the moment he considers himself to be a free being. He will plainly tell the master: 'I was your bondsman till this moment, but I am a slave no longer. You may kill me if you like, but if you keep me alive, I wish to tell you that if you release me from the bondage, of your own accord, I will ask for nothing more from you. You used to feed and clothe me, though I could have provided food and clothing for myself by my labour. I hitherto depended on you instead of on God, for food and raiment. But God has now inspired me with an urge for freedom and I am today a free man, and will no longer depend on you.'

"You may take it from me that I am not going to strike a bargain with the Viceroy for ministries and the like. I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. May be, he will propose the abolition of salt tax, the drink evil, etc. But I will say 'Nothing less than freedom'.

"Here is a *mantra*, a short one, that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The *mantra* is: 'Do or Die'. We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery. Every true Congressman or woman will join the struggle with an inflexible determination not to remain alive to see the country in bondage and slavery. Let that be your pledge. Keep jails out of your consideration. If the Government keep me free, I will spare you the trouble of filling the jails. I will not put on the Government the strain of maintaining a large number of prisoners at a time, when it is in trouble. Let every man and woman live every moment of his or her life hereafter in the consciousness that he or she eats or lives for achieving freedom and will die, if need be, to attain that goal. Take a pledge, with God and your own conscience as witness, that you will no longer rest till freedom is achieved and will be prepared to lay down your lives in the attempt to achieve it. He who loses his life will gain it; he who will seek to save it shall lose it. Freedom is not for the coward or the faint-hearted.

"A word to the journalists. I congratulate you on the support you have hitherto given to the national demand. I know the restrictions and handicaps under which you have to labour. But I would now ask you to snap the chains that bind you. It should be the proud privilege of the newspapers to lead and set an example in laying down one's life for freedom. You have the pen which the Government can't suppress. I know you have large properties in the form of printing-presses, etc., and you would be afraid lest the Government should attach them. I do not ask you to invite an attachment of the printing-press voluntarily. For myself, I would not suppress my pen, even if the press was to be attached. As you know my press was attached in the past and returned later on. But I do not ask from you that final sacrifice. I suggest a middle way. You should now wind up your standing committee, and you may declare that you will give up writing under the present restrictions and take up the pen only when India has won her freedom. You may tell Sir Frederick Puckle that he can't expect from you a command performance, that his press notes are full of untruth, and that you will refuse to publish them. You will openly declare that you are whole-heartedly with the Congress. If you do this, you will have changed the atmosphere before the fight actually begins.

"From the princes I ask with all respect due to them a very small thing. I am a well-wisher of the princes. I was born in a State. My grandfather refused to salute with his right hand any prince other than his own. But he did not say to the prince, as I feel he ought to have said, that even his own master could not compel him, his minister, to act against his conscience. I have eaten the princes' salt and I would not be false to it. As a faithful servant, it is my duty to warn the princes that if they will act while I am still alive, the princes may come to occupy an honourable place in free India. In Jawaharlal's scheme of free India, no privileges or the privileged classes have a place. Jawaharlal considers all property to be State-owned. He wants planned economy. He wants to reconstruct India according to plan. He likes to fly; I do not. I have kept a place for the princes and the zamindars in India that I

envisage. I would ask the princes in all humility to enjoy through renunciation. The princes may renounce ownership over their properties and become their trustees in the true sense of the term. I visualize God in the assemblage of people. The princes may say to their people: 'You are the owners and masters of the State and we are your servants.' I would ask the princes to become servants of the people and render to them an account of their own services. The empire too bestows power on the princes, but they should prefer to derive power from their own people; and if they want to indulge in some innocent pleasures, they may seek to do so as servants of the people. I do not want the princes to live as paupers. But I would ask them: 'Do you want to remain slaves for all time? Why should you, instead of paying homage to a foreign power, not accept the sovereignty of your own people?' You may write to the Political Department: 'The people are now awake. How are we to withstand an avalanche before which even the large empires are crumbling? We therefore, shall belong to the people from today onwards. We shall sink or swim with them.' Believe me, there is nothing unconstitutional in the course I am suggesting. There are, so far as I know, no treaties enabling the empire to coerce the princes. The people of the States will also declare that though they are the princes' subjects, they are part of the Indian nation and that they will accept the leadership of the princes, if the latter cast their lot with the people, but not otherwise. If this declaration enrages the princes and they choose to kill the people, the latter will meet death bravely and unflinchingly, but will not go back on their word.

"Nothing, however, should be done secretly. This is an open rebellion. In this struggle secrecy is a sin. A free man would not engage in a secret movement. It is likely that when you gain freedom you will have a C.I.D. of your own, in spite of my advice to the contrary. But in the present struggle, we have to work openly and to receive bullets on our chest, without taking to heels.

"I have a word to say to Government servants also. They may not, if they like, resign their posts yet. The late

Justice Ranade did not resign his post, but he openly declared that he belonged to the Congress. He said to the Government that though he was a judge, he was a Congressman and would openly attend the sessions of the Congress, but that at the same time he would not let his political views warp his impartiality on the bench. He held Social Reform Conference in the very pandal of the Congress. I would ask all the Government servants to follow in the footsteps of Ranade and to declare their allegiance to the Congress as an answer to the secret circular issued by Sir Frederick Puckle.

"This is all that I ask of you just now. I will now write to the Viceroy. You will be able to read the correspondence not just now but when I publish it with the Viceroy's consent. But you are free to aver that you support the demand to be put forth in my letter. A judge came to me and said: 'We get secret circulars from high quarters. What are we to do?' I replied, 'If I were in your place, I would ignore the circulars. You may openly say to the Government: "I have received your secret circular. I am, however, with the Congress. Though I serve the Government for my livelihood, I am not going to obey these secret circulars or to employ underhand methods."'

"Soldiers too are covered by the present programme. I do not ask them just now to resign their posts and to leave the army. The soldiers come to me, Jawaharlal and the Maulana and say: 'We are wholly with you. We are tired of the Governmental tyranny.' To these soldiers I would say: 'You may say to the Government, "Our hearts are with the Congress. We are not going to leave our posts. We will serve you so long as we receive your salaries. We will obey your just orders, but will refuse to fire on our own people."'

"To those who lack the courage to do this much I have nothing to say. They will go their own way. But if you can do this much, you may take it from me that the whole atmosphere will be electrified. Let the Government then shower bombs, if they like. But no power on earth will then be able to keep you in bondage any longer.

"If the students want to join the struggle only to go back to their studies after a while, I would not invite them



to it. For the present, however, till the time that I frame a programme for the struggle, I would ask the students to say to their professors: 'We belong to the Congress. Do you belong to the Congress or to the Government? If you belong to the Congress, you need not vacate your posts. You will remain at your posts but teach us and lead us unto freedom.' In all fights for freedom, the world over, the students have made very large contributions.

"If in the interval that is left to us before the actual fight begins, you do even the little I have suggested to you, you will have changed the atmosphere and will have prepared the ground for the next step.

"There is much I should yet like to say. But my heart is heavy. I have already taken up much of your time. I have yet to say a few words in English also. I thank you for the patience and attention with which you have listened to me even at this late hour. It is just what true soldiers would do. For the last twenty-two years, I have controlled my speech and pen and have stored up my energy. He is a true Brahmachari who does not fritter away his energy. He will, therefore, always control his speech. That has been my conscious effort all these years. But today the occasion has come when I had to unburden my heart before you. I have done so, even though it meant putting a strain on your patience; and I do not regret having done it. I have given you my message and through you I have delivered it to the whole of India."

*Mahatma*, Vol. VI, pp. 191-203

### III

[The following is the concluding portion of Gandhiji's speech before the A.I.C.C. at Bombay on 8-8-'42 which was delivered in English:]

I have taken such an inordinately long time over pouring out, what was agitating my soul, to those whom I had just now the privilege of serving. I have been called their leader or, in the military language, their commander. But I do not look at my position in that light. I have no weapon but love to wield my authority over any one. I do sport a stick which you can break into bits without the slightest exertion. It is simply my staff with the help of

which I walk. Such a cripple is not elated, when he has been called upon to bear the greatest burden. You can share that burden only when I appear before you not as your commander but as a humble servant. And he who serves best is the chief among equals.

Therefore, I was bound to share with you such thoughts as were welling up in my breast and tell you, in as summary a manner as I can, what I expect you to do as the first step.

Let me tell you at the outset that the real struggle does not commence today. I have yet to go through much ceremonial as I always do. The burden, I confess, would be almost unbearable. I have to continue to reason in those circles with whom I have lost my credit and who have no trust left in me. I know that in the course of the last few weeks I have forfeited my credit with a large number of friends, so much so, that they have begun to doubt not only my wisdom but even my honesty. Now I hold my wisdom is not such a treasure which I cannot afford to lose; but my honesty is a precious treasure to me and I can ill-afford to lose it. I seem however to have lost it for the time being.

### **Friend of the Empire**

Such occasions arise in the life of the man who is a pure seeker after truth and who would seek to serve the humanity and his country to the best of his lights without fear or hypocrisy. For the last fifty years I have known no other way. I have been a humble servant of humanity and have rendered on more than one occasion such service as I could to the Empire, and here let me say without fear of challenge that throughout my career never have I asked for any personal favour. I have enjoyed the privilege of friendship as I enjoy it today with Lord Linlithgow. It is a friendship which has outgrown official relationship. Whether Lord Linlithgow will bear me out, I do not know, but there is a personal bond between him and myself. He once introduced me to his daughter. His son-in-law, the A.D.C. was drawn towards me. He fell in love with Mahadev more than with me and Lady Anna and he came to me. She is an obedient and favourite daughter. I take

interest in their welfare. I take the liberty to give out these personal and sacred tit-bits only to give you an earnest of the personal bond which exists between us; and yet let me declare here that that personal bond will never interfere with the stubborn struggle on which, if it falls to my lot, I may have to launch against Lord Linlithgow, as the representative of the Empire. I will have to resist the might of that Empire with the might of the dumb millions with no limit but of non-violence as policy confined to this struggle. It is a terrible job to have to offer resistance to a Viceroy with whom I enjoy such relations. He has more than once trusted my word, often about my people. I would love to repeat that experiment, as it stands to his credit. I mention this with great pride and pleasure. I mention it as an earnest of my desire to be true to the Empire when that Empire forfeited my trust and the Englishman who was its Viceroy came to know it.

### **Charlie Andrews**

Then there is the sacred memory of Charlie Andrews which wells up within me. At this moment the spirit of Andrews hovers about me. For me he sums up the brightest traditions of English culture. I enjoyed closer relations with him than with most Indians. I enjoyed his confidence. There were no secrets between us. We exchanged our hearts every day. Whatever was in his heart, he would blurt out without the slightest hesitation or reservation. It is true he was a friend of Gurudev, but he looked upon Gurudev with awe. He had that peculiar humility. But with me he became the closest friend. Years ago he came to me with a note of introduction from Gokhale. Pearson and he were the first-rank specimens of Englishmen. I know that his spirit is listening to me.

Then I have got a warm letter of congratulations from the Metropolitan of Calcutta. I hold him to be a man of God. Today he is opposed to me.

### **Voice of Conscience**

With all this background, I want to declare to the world, although I may have forfeited the regard of many friends in the West and I must bow my head low; but

even for their friendship or love I must not suppress the voice of conscience—the promptings of my inner basic nature today. There is something within me impelling me to cry out my agony. I have known humanity. I have studied something of psychology. Such a man knows exactly what it is. I do not mind how you describe it. That voice within tells me, “You have to stand against the whole world although you may have to stand alone. You have to stare in the face the whole world although the world may look at you with bloodshot eyes. Do not fear. Trust the little voice residing within your heart.” It says: “Forsake friends, wife and all; but testify to that for which you have lived and for which you have to die.” Believe me, friends I am not anxious to die. I want to live my full span of life. And for me I put my span of life at 120 years. By that time India will be free, the world will be free.

### **Real Freedom**

Let me tell you too that I do not regard England or for that matter America as free countries. They are free after their own fashion, free to hold in bondage coloured races of the earth. Are England and America fighting for the liberty of these races today? If not, do not ask me to wait until after the war. You shall not limit my concept of freedom. The English and American teachers, their history, their magnificent poetry have not said that you shall not broaden the interpretation of freedom. And according to my interpretation of that freedom I am constrained to say they are strangers to that freedom which their teachers and poets have described. If they will know the real freedom they should come to India. They have to come not with pride or arrogance but in the spirit of real earnest seekers of truth. It is a fundamental truth which India has been experimenting with for 22 years.

### **Congress and Non-violence**

Unconsciously from its very foundations long ago the Congress has been building on non-violence known as constitutional methods. Dadabhai and Pherozeshah who have held the Congress India in the palm of their hands

became rebels. They were lovers of the Congress. They were its masters. But above all they were real servants. They never countenanced murder, secrecy and the like. I confess there are many black sheep amongst us Congressmen. But I trust the whole of India today to launch upon a non-violent struggle. I trust because of my nature to rely upon the innate goodness of human nature which perceives the truth and prevails during the crisis as if by instinct. But even if I am deceived in this I shall not swerve. I shall not flinch. From its very inception the Congress based its policy on peaceful methods, included Swaraj and the subsequent generations added non-violence. When Dada-bhai entered the British Parliament, Salisbury dubbed him as a black man; but the English people defeated Salisbury and Dadabhai went to the Parliament by their vote. India was delirious with joy. These things however India has outgrown.

### **I will Go Ahead**

It is, however, with all these things as the background that I want Englishmen, Europeans and all the United Nations to examine in their hearts what crime had India committed in demanding Independence. I ask, is it right for you to distrust such an organization with all its background, tradition and record of over half a century and misrepresent its endeavours before all the world by every means at your command? Is it right that by hook or by crook, aided by the foreign press, aided by the President of the U.S.A., or even by the Generalissimo of China who has yet to win his laurels, you should present India's struggle in shocking caricature? I have met the Generalissimo. I have known him through Madame Shek who was my interpreter; and though he seemed inscrutable to me, not so Madame Shek; and he allowed me to read his mind through her. There is a chorus of disapproval and righteous protest all over the world against us. They say we are erring, the move is inopportune. I had great regard for British diplomacy which has enabled them to hold the Empire so long. Now it stinks in my nostrils, and others have studied that diplomacy and are putting it into practice. They may succeed in getting, through these methods, world opinion



on their side for a time; but India will speak against that world opinion. She will raise her voice against all the organized propaganda. I will speak against it. Even if all the United Nations opposed me, even if the whole of India forsakes me, I will say, "You are wrong. India will wrench with non-violence her liberty from unwilling hands." I will go ahead not for India's sake alone, but for the sake of the world. Even if my eyes close before there is freedom, non-violence will not end. They will be dealing a mortal blow to China and to Russia if they oppose the freedom of non-violent India which is pleading with bended knees for the fulfilment of debt long overdue. Does a creditor ever go to the debtor like that? And even when, India is met with such angry opposition, she says, "We won't hit below the belt, we have learnt sufficient gentlemanliness. We are pledged to non-violence." I have been the author of non-embarrassment policy of the Congress and yet today you find me talking this strong language. I say it is consistent with our honour. If a man holds me by the neck and wants to drown me, may I not struggle to free myself directly? There is no inconsistency in our position today.

### **Appeal to United Nations**

There are representatives of the foreign press assembled here today. Through them I wish to say to the world that the United Powers who somehow or other say that they have need for India, have the opportunity now to declare India free and prove their *bona fides*. If they miss it, they will be missing the opportunity of their lifetime, and history will record that they did not discharge their obligations to India in time, and lost the battle. I want the blessings of the whole world so that I may succeed with them. I do not want the United Powers to go beyond their obvious limitations. I do not want them to accept non-violence and disarm today. There is a fundamental difference between fascism and this imperialism which I am fighting. Do the British get from India all they want? What they get today is from India which they hold in bondage. Think what difference it would make if India was to participate as a free ally. That freedom, if it is to come, must come today. It will have no taste left in it if

today you who have the power to help cannot exercise it. If you can exercise it, under the glow of freedom what seems impossible, today, will become possible tomorrow. If India feels that freedom, she will command that freedom for China. The road for running to Russia's help will be open. The Englishmen did not die in Malaya or on Burma soil. What shall enable us to retrieve the situation? Where shall I go, and where shall I take the forty crores of India? How is this vast mass of humanity to be aglow in the cause of world deliverance, unless and until it has touched and felt freedom. Today they have no touch of life left. It has been crushed out of them. If lustre is to be put into their eyes, freedom has to come not tomorrow, but today.

### **Do or Die**

Concluding Gandhiji said, "I have pledged the Congress and the Congress will do or die."

From a galley-proof traced from our records

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## **SABOTAGE AND SECRECY**

"How is the cutting of telegraphic wires contrary to the principle of Ahimsa?" a friend asked Gandhiji some time back.

The question is typical of many that have been put to Gandhiji since his release. Another friend who saw him some time after he left the Agakhan Palace posed to him the problem thus: "There are two schools of thought amongst our youth today. One school holds and openly says that as a programme of action Ahimsa is played out. It has done its work which was to waken the masses and has set the stage for the final struggle for independence. In this struggle force of arms cannot be excluded. The other school while professing belief in Ahimsa says that there is room for modification and further elaboration in its technique. They aver that the next phase of our struggle would be characterized by organized sabotage on an extensive scale." Gandhiji questioned the statement that sabotage could be part of the non-violent programme or

that it was derivable from the principle of Ahimsa as he understood it. The friend however persisted that sabotage had come to stay whether one liked it or not. "Irresponsible prophesying leads to nowhere," cut short Gandhiji. "The real question is where we stand, what our attitude towards it is going to be."

The friend put before Gandhiji some of his doubts. Was destruction of Government property violence? "You say that nobody has a right to destroy any property not his own. If so, is not Government property mine? I hold it is mine and I may destroy it."

"There is a double fallacy involved in your argument," replied Gandhiji. "In the first place, conceding that Government property is national property — which today it is not — I may not destroy it because I am dissatisfied with the Government. But even a national Government will be unable to carry on for a day if everybody claimed the right to destroy bridges, communications, roads, etc., because he disapproved of some of its activities. Moreover, the evil resides not in bridges, roads, etc. which are inanimate objects but in men. It is the latter who need to be tackled. The destruction of bridges, etc., by means of explosives does not touch this evil but only provokes a worse evil in the place of the one it seeks to end." "I agree," rejoined the friend, "that the evil is within ourselves, not in the bridge which can be used for a good purpose as well as an evil one. I also agree that its blowing up provokes counter violence of a worse type. But it may be necessary from a strategic point of view for the success of the movement and in order to prevent demoralization."

"It is an old argument," replied Gandhiji. "One used to hear it in the old days in defence of terrorism. Sabotage is a form of violence. People have realized the futility of physical violence but some people apparently think that it may be successfully practised in its modified form as sabotage. It is my conviction that the whole mass of people would not have risen to the height of courage and fearlessness that they have but for the working of full non-violence. How it works we do not yet fully know. But the fact remains that under non-violence we have

progressed from strength to strength even through our apparent failures and setbacks. On the other hand terrorism resulted in demoralization. Haste leads to waste."

"We have found," rejoined the friend, "that a person who has had a schooling in violent activity comes nearer to true non-violence than one who has had no such experience."

"That can be true only in the sense that having tried violence again and again he has realized its futility. That is all. Would you maintain also that a person who has had a taste of vice is nearer to virtue than the one who had none? For, that is what your argument amounts to."

The discussion then turned upon secrecy. The friend in question argued that whilst individual secrecy created a fear complex and was therefore an evil, organized secrecy might be useful. "It is no secrecy if the person concerned is boldly prepared to face the consequences of his action. He resorts to secrecy in order to achieve his object. He can refuse to take any part in subsequent interrogations during his trial. He need not make a false statement."

But Gandhiji was adamant. "No secret organization, however big, could do any good. Secrecy aims at building a wall of protection round you. Ahimsa disdains all such protection. It functions in the open and in the face of odds, the heaviest conceivable. We have to organize for action vast people that have been crushed under the heel of unspeakable tyranny for centuries. They cannot be organized by any other than open truthful means. I have grown up from youth to 76 years in abhorrence of secrecy. There must be no watering down of the ideal. Unless we cling to the formula in its fulness, we shall not make any headway.

"I know we have not always lived up to our ideal. There have been grave lapses. Had our instruments been less imperfect, we would have been nearer our goal. But in spite of our temporizing with our ideal, non-violence has worked like a silent leaven among the dumb millions. That does not mean that we can afford to go on like this for ever. We cannot remain static. We must move forward or we shall slide back."

"Are you of opinion," asked the friend, "that the August revolution caused a setback in the struggle for independence; that all the heroism and courage which our people showed in the course of it was useless?"

"No," replied Gandhiji. "I do not say that. In the historical process, the country will be found to have advanced towards freedom through every form of struggle, even through the August upheaval. All that I have said is that the progress would have been much greater if we had shown the non-violent bravery of my conception. In this sense the sabotage activity has retarded the country's freedom. I have the highest admiration for the courage, patriotism and spirit of self-sacrifice of people, say, like Jaiprakash Narain. But Jaiprakash cannot be my ideal. If I had to give a medal for heroism, it would go not to him but to his wife who, though simple and unlearned in politics, typifies in her person the power of Satyagraha in its purest form before which even Jaiprakash has to bow. What I have said about the August upheaval is not by way of judgment upon the past—I have consistently refused to condemn it—but as a guidance for the future."

"Our people," said the friend finally, "have faith in non-violence but they do not know how to make it dynamic. What is the reason for this failure?"

"By hammering away at it through painful years," replied Gandhiji, "people have begun to see that there is a potency in non-violence, but they have not seen it in all its fulness and beauty. If they had responded to all the steps that had to be taken for the effective organization of non-violence and carried out in their fulness the various items of the eighteen-fold constructive programme, our movement would have taken us to our goal. But today our minds are confused because our faith in constructive work is so weak. I know, one must push forth undaunted by difficulties."

On the train to Madura, 2-2-'46

*Harijan*, 10-2-1946



## NON-VIOLENCE AND MOLESTATION OF WOMEN

On the night of 29th December 1945, Gandhiji met about 200 men and women of Mahishadal and the near-about villages. They included local workers and victims of police and military atrocities during the 1942 upheaval. Gandhiji invited questions. The first question was whether they were expected to remain non-violent even in the face of their women being dishonoured. They believed in suffering for Swaraj. They believed that any departure from non-violence would delay the coming of Swaraj. Then, what could they do in cases of molestation of their womenfolk?

Gandhiji replied that he had been asked the same question in 1920 and 1921 and he could only repeat the reply which he gave then. The question betrayed ignorance of non-violence and also of Swaraj of his conception. He did not want Swaraj at the cost of women's honour. If what passed as non-violence did not enable them to protect the honour of women or if it did not enable the women to protect their own honour, it was not non-violence. "Believe, it is something quite different," and he described what he had written in *Hind Swaraj* in 1909. The reader should read the argument on pages 44 to 51\* of the Navajivan Press edition. Gandhiji observed that experience had added force to the argument. "After all who protected Sita from Ravan? The Poet tells us that her purity was such that Ravan dared not compass his end without her consent."

He warned them in the end that if anybody came to him with the plea that they could not protect the honour of their womenfolk because they had taken the vow of non-violence, he would give them no quarter. Non-violence should never be used as a shield for cowardice. It was a weapon of the brave. He would rather they died fighting violently than became helpless witnesses to such atrocities. A truly non-violent man would never live to

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\* Pages 77 to 86 in the 1958 edition.

tell the tale of such atrocities. He would have laid down his life on the spot in non-violent resistance.

In this connection I am reminded of Gandhiji's Frontier tour where the Khudai Khidmatgars had asked him the same question. "What if the miscreant does not kill you but ties you up instead and gags you so that you are forced to be a silent witness of his misdeed," they had asked after hearing his reply which was practically the same as he gave to the people at Mahishadal. "I will struggle," he had replied, "so that I will either break the bonds or break myself in the effort. In no case will I remain a helpless witness. When that intensity of feeling is there, God will come to your aid and somehow or other spare you the agony of being a living witness to such a deed."

Mahishadal, 29-12-'45

*Harijan*, 10-2-1946

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### NON-VIOLENT TECHNIQUE AND PARALLEL GOVERNMENT

Perhaps no part of India has passed through such fire of suffering as Midnapore during the August upheaval in 1942, when man's brutality completed the work of nature's wrath. Their suffering had chastened them but did not subdue their spirit. The chastening effect was visible in the perfect discipline and pin-drop silence that marked Gandhiji's prayer gatherings which were sometimes attended by over a lakh of people.

The question of non-violence and *Jatiya Sarkar* naturally constituted the core of the discussions which the Congress workers of Midnapore had with Gandhiji during his visit to Mahishadal. *Jatiya Sarkar* was set up in the *thanas* of Sutahata, Nandigram, Mahishadal and Tamluk in Midnapore district on 17-12-'42 and 16-1-'43 and was formally dissolved on August 8, 1944, as a result of the publication of Gandhiji's statement on secrecy and underground work after his release from detention. By September 1944, about 150 workers connected with it had come out into

the open and surrendered themselves to the authorities. In a comprehensive report which the workers of Midnapore submitted to Gandhiji during his visit to Mahishadal, they described in graphic detail how during the August upheaval the people had captured *thanas*, burnt down *kutcheries*, paralyzed communications, and organized a parallel police service, intelligence branch and law courts where delinquents and those engaged in anti-social activities were brought to book and dealt with "according to law". They had scrupulously avoided taking of life, they claimed, and had therefore acted non-violently.

Later on they discussed the whole question of parallel government and sabotage with Gandhiji. "I cannot say," remarked Gandhiji "that all that has been done has been well done or ought to have been done. On the contrary, much of it ought not to have been done. That the people did not remain inert is a matter of satisfaction, but the fact that after all these years they should not have known what the Congress stood for is a matter for sorrow. What they did was thoughtless. By its very nature it could not be sustained.

"You have graphically put in your reports how you blew up a railway track, put a road out of use, burnt a *kutchery*, seized a *thana*, set up a parallel government and so on. This is not the technique of non-violent action. People committed the mistake of thinking that all that did not involve killing was non-violence. Sometimes killing is the cleanest part of violence. If you kill the mischief-maker outright, there is an end to it as far as he is concerned, but harassment is worse. It did not put out mischief. On the contrary, it brought the mischief on our own heads. The authorities became vindictive. Perhaps you will say that they would have been vindictive anyhow, but that is not what we should desire or aim at. It does not pay us to let them go into a panic.

"In August 1942, the authorities became panicky. We gave them that excuse. But they are a people who do not know what defeat is; their cowardice is not fundamental. So, they let such things as *thanas*, *kutcheries*, panchayat courts etc., remain in your hands for a short while as

toys, but as soon as they had completed their dispositions they turned the full blast of their machinery of retaliation against us. It is not in this way that India will attain her independence. We cannot afford to repeat it.

"Today you have to reckon not with Britain alone but the Big Three. You cannot successfully fight them with their own weapons. After all you cannot go beyond the atom bomb. Unless we can have a new way of fighting imperialism of all brands in the place of the outworn one of a violent rising, there is no hope for the oppressed races of the earth.

"Let nobody be misled by the Russian parallel," he continued. "Our tradition is wholly different from Russia's. The historical setting too is different. In Russia the whole population was under arms; Indian masses won't take to arms even if they could be given the necessary training. But it is useless to think that our rulers will let us give them that training when they have at a stroke disarmed a first-rate military State like Japan. Today Japan lies prostrate at the conqueror's feet. But non-violence knows no defeat. It must however be true non-violence, not a make-believe. I would not shed a single tear if I alone were left to represent such non-violence."

"After all that we have done and suffered," observed the friends, "we have begun to doubt whether our energies have flown in the right channel, whether the mass awakening was not misdirected. But, is not non-violent rebellion, a programme of seizure of power?" they asked.

"Therein lies the fallacy," replied Gandhiji. "A non-violent revolution is not a programme of 'seizure of power'. It is a programme of transformation of relationships ending in a peaceful transfer of power. If the people had fully carried out the five steps outlined by me in my 8th of August speech in the A.I.C.C. in Bombay, and had there been a perfect atmosphere of non-violence, the Government's power of repression would have been sterilized and, it would have been compelled to yield to the national demand.

"If under the impact of foreign invasion or some such cause the ruling power abdicates and a vacuum is created,

the people's organization will naturally take over its functions; but such *Jatiya Sarkar* would have no other sanction except that of non-violence and service of the people to enforce its fiat. It will never use coercion. Even those who might hold contrary views will receive a full measure of security under it."

As an instance of the infinitely greater efficacy of the non-violent technique as compared to the technique of coercion, he mentioned the case of Bardoli. In Midnapore whilst they succeeded in capturing a few symbols of power in the initial stages, they could not retain the fruits of their success. But in Bardoli the Satyagrahis were able fully to retain the gains of their struggle. "Moreover, you have seen," resumed Gandhiji, "that all your bravery could not prevent the violation of women. Now that is intolerable. No one should be able to cast an evil eye upon them. This requires inculcation of a higher form of bravery, i.e. that of non-violence which can hurl defiance at death and against which the power of the aggressor cannot prevail. This is what I am trying to do. It may take time. It takes a long time to infuse this kind of higher courage among the millions. Whether this kind of non-violence will ever come into play or not I do not know. But you, who have had training in non-violence for all these years, ought to realize that in your hands non-violence should show all the brilliance that is inherent in it."

They next wanted to know as to how they could start on the right lines. Gandhiji in reply prescribed to them the spinning wheel as "the symbol and central sun of the 18-fold constructive programme". It was the best way of achieving social solidarity and non-violent organization. The technique of non-violent action consisted in isolating and sterilizing the instruments of evil. *Jatiya Sarkar* based on non-violence would not put Government servants under duress, but would effectively isolate them so that they would either have to align themselves with the people or be reduced to the necessity of carrying out the foreign Government's writ through undiluted barbarism of which they would soon sicken and tire. Even their relations and dear ones would desert them. "This presupposes that no



section among the people is labouring under a sense of injustice and wrong at the hands of the others. Untouchability, exploitation and communal rancour can have no place under a *Jatiya Sarkar*, or it will be like a house divided against itself which must fall."

Sevagram, 9-2-'46

*Harijan*, 17-2-1946

### 73

## AFRICA AND INDIA

There was a group of Negro soldiers from West Africa. West African Negroes are perhaps the most awakened of the Africans. The experiment of modern university education has been tried among them and has produced some brilliant though queer results.

They quoted Gandhiji's observation that to remain in slavery is beneath the dignity of man; a slave who is conscious of his state and yet does not strive to break his chains is lower than the beast. "How can a continent like Africa fight down the fetters of slavery when it is so hopelessly divided?" they asked.

"I know your difficulty," replied Gandhiji. "If you think of the vast size of Africa, the distance and natural obstacles separating its various parts, the scattered condition of its people and the terrible divisions among them, the task might well appear to be hopeless. But there is a charm which can overcome all these handicaps. The moment the slave resolves that he will no longer be a slave, his fetters fall. He frees himself and shows the way to others. Freedom and slavery are mental states. Therefore, the first thing is to say to yourself: 'I shall no longer accept the role of a slave. I shall not obey orders as such but shall disobey them when they are in conflict with my conscience.' The so-called master may lash you and try to force you to serve him. You will say: 'No, I will not serve you for your money or under a threat.' This may mean suffering. Your readiness to suffer will light the torch of freedom which can never be put out."

"Africa and India both drink of the cup of slavery. What necessary steps can be taken to unite the two nations so as to present a common front?"

"You are right," replied Gandhiji. "India is not yet free and yet Indians have begun to realize that their freedom is coming, not because the white man says so but because they have developed the power within. Inasmuch as India's struggle is non-violent, it is a struggle for the emancipation of all the oppressed races against superior might. I do not propose mechanical joint action between them. 'Each one has to find his own salvation' is true of this as well as of the other world. It is enough that there is a real moral bond between Asiatics and Africans. It will grow as time passes."

They wanted to know what India could give them and how they could achieve 'co-operative industrialization in order to be saved from the terrible exploitation under which they were suffering.

"The commerce between India and Africa," replied Gandhiji, "will be of ideas and services, not of manufactured goods against raw materials after the fashion of Western exploiters. Then, India can offer you the spinning wheel. If I had discovered it when I was in South Africa, I would have introduced it among the Africans who were my neighbours in Phoenix. You can grow cotton, you have ample leisure and plenty of manual skill. You should study and adopt the lesson of the village crafts we are trying to revive. Therein lies the key to your salvation."

Sevagram, 8-2-'46

*Harijan*, 24-2-1946

## WHITE MAN'S BURDEN!

Passive resistance is aimed at removal in a most approved manner of bad laws, customs or other evils and is designed to be a complete and effective substitute for forcible methods including hooliganism and lynch law. It is an appeal to the heart of man. Often reason fails. It is dwarfed by self. The theory is that an adequate appeal to the heart never fails. Seeming failure is not of the law of Satyagraha but of incompetence of the Satyagrahi by whatever cause induced. It may not be possible to give a complete historical instance. The name of Jesus at once comes to the lips. It is an instance of brilliant failure. And he has been acclaimed in the West as the Prince of passive resisters. I showed years ago in South Africa that the adjective 'passive' was a misnomer, at least as applied to Jesus. He was the most active resister known perhaps to history. His was non-violence *par excellence*. But I must no longer stray from my main subject. It is the resistance of the Jesus type that the White hooligans are seeking to thwart. Let us hope that our countrymen's heroic resistance will not only shame the hooligans into silence but prove the precursor of the repeal of the law that disfigures the statute book of South Africa. In concrete form, what pure suffering, wholly one-sided, does is to stir public opinion against a wrong. Legislators are, after all, representatives of the public. In obedience to it they have enacted a wrong. They have to reverse the process when the same public, awakened to the wrong, demands its removal.

The real 'White man's burden' is not insolently to dominate coloured or black people under the guise of protection, it is to desist from the hypocrisy which is eating into them. It is time White men learnt to treat every human being as their equal. There is no mystery about whiteness of the skin. It has repeatedly been proved that given equal opportunity a man, be he of any colour or country, is fully equal to any other.

Therefore, White men throughout the world and especially of India should act upon their fellow-men in

South Africa and call upon them not to molest Indian resisters who are bravely struggling to preserve the self-respect of Indians in the Union and the honour of their motherland. "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." Or, do they take in vain the name of him who said this? Have they banished from their hearts the great coloured Asiatic who gave to the world the above message? Do they forget that the greatest of the teachers of mankind were all Asiatics and did not possess a white face? These, if they descended on earth and went to South Africa, will all have to live in the segregated areas and be classed as Asiatics and coloured people unfit by law to be equals of Whites.

Is a civilization worth the name which requires for its existence the very doubtful prop of racial legislation and lynch law? The silver lining to the cloud that hangs over the devoted heads of our countrymen lies in the plucky action of Rev. Scott, a White clergyman, and his equally White fellow workers, who have undertaken to share the sufferings of the Indian resisters.

New Delhi, 26-6-'46

*Harijan*, 30-6-1946

## HOW TO CANALIZE HATRED

Hatred is in the air and impatient lovers of the country will gladly take advantage of it, if they can, through violence, to further the cause of independence. I suggest that it is wrong at any time and everywhere. But it is more wrong and unbecoming in a country where fighters for freedom have declared to the world that their policy is truth and non-violence. Hatred, they argue, cannot be turned into love. Those who believed in violence will naturally use it by saying, 'kill your enemy, injure him and his property wherever you can, whether openly or secretly as necessity requires'. The result will be deeper hatred and counter hatred, and vengeance let loose on both sides. The recent war, whose embers have yet hardly died, loudly proclaims the bankruptcy of this use of hatred. And it

remains to be seen whether the so-called victors have really won or whether they have not depressed themselves in seeking and trying to depress their enemies. It is a bad game at its best. Some philosophers of action in this country improve upon the model and say, 'We shall never kill our enemy but we shall destroy his property.' Perhaps I do them an injustice when I call it 'his property', for the remarkable thing is that the so-called enemy has brought no property of his own and what little he has brought he makes us pay for. Therefore, what we destroy is really our own. The bulk of it, whether in men or things, he produces here. So what he really has is the custody of it. For the destruction too we have to pay through the nose and it is the innocent who are made to pay. That is the implication of punitive tax and all it carries with it. Non-violence in the sense of mere non-killing does not appear to me, therefore, to be any improvement on the technique of violence. It means slow torture and when slowness becomes ineffective we shall immediately revert to killing and to the atom bomb, which is the last word in violence today. Therefore, I suggested in 1920 the use of non-violence and its inevitable twin companion truth, for canalizing hatred into the proper channel. The hater hates not for the sake of hatred but because he wants to drive away from his country the hated being or beings. He will, therefore, as readily achieve his end by non-violent as by violent means. For the past 25 years, willingly or unwillingly, the Congress has spoken to the masses in favour of non-violence as against violence for regaining our lost liberty. We have also discovered through our progress that in the application of non-violence we have been able to reach the mass mind far more quickly and far more extensively than ever before. And yet, if truth is told as it must be, our non-violent action has been half-hearted. Many have preached non-violence through the lips while harbouring violence in the breast. But the unsophisticated mass mind has read the secret meaning hidden in our breast and the unconscious reaction has not been altogether as it might have been. Hypocrisy has acted as an ode to virtue, but it could never take its place. And so I plead



for non-violence and yet more non-violence. I do so not without knowledge but with sixty years' experience behind me. This is the critical moment, for the dumb masses are today starving. There are many ways that will suggest themselves to the wise reader as to how to apply the canons of non-violence to the present needs of the country. The hypnotism of the I.N.A.\* has cast its spell upon us. Netaji's name is one to conjure with. His patriotism is second to none. (I use the present tense intentionally). His bravery shines through all his actions. He aimed high but failed. Who has not failed? Ours is to aim high and to aim well. It is not given to everyone to command success. My praise and admiration can go no further. For I knew that his action was doomed to failure, and that I would have said so even if he had brought his I.N.A. victorious to India, because the masses would not have come into their own in this manner. The lesson that Netaji and his army bring to us is one of self-sacrifice, unity irrespective of class and community, and discipline. If our adoration will be wise and discriminating, we will rigidly copy this trinity of virtues, but we will as rigidly abjure violence. I would not have the I.N.A. man think or say that he and his can ever deliver the masses of India from bondage by force of arms. But if he is true to Netaji and still more so to the country, he will spend himself in teaching the masses, men, women and children, to be brave, self-sacrificing and united. Then we will be able to stand erect before the world. But if he will merely act the armed soldiers, he will only lord it over the masses and the fact that he will be a volunteer will not count for much. I, therefore, welcome the declaration made by Capt. Shah Nawaz that to be worthy of Netaji, on having come to Indian soil, he will act as a humble soldier of non-violence in Congress ranks.

Sevagram, 15-2-'46

*Harijan*, 24-2-1946

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\* The Indian National Army (I.N.A.) was formed in Singapore in 1941-42. It hoped under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to free India from British rule. When the British regained Singapore and Burma, the I.N.A. men were taken prisoners by the British and tried in India. —Ed.

## THE MESSAGE OF THE I.N.A.

India has accorded to the released I.N.A. men a right royal welcome. They have been acclaimed as national heroes. Everybody seems to have been swept off his feet before the rising tide of popular sentiment. I must, however, frankly confess to you that I do not share this indiscriminate hero-worship. I admire the ability, sacrifice and patriotism of the I.N.A. and Netaji Bose. But I cannot subscribe to the method which they adopted and which is incompatible with the one followed by the Congress for the last twenty-five years for the attainment of independence. Yesterday I spoke to you of a *sthitaprajna*, i.e. "the man of steady wisdom", i.e., a Satyagrahi. If we accept that ideal we would not regard anybody as our enemy; we must shed all enmity and ill-will. That ideal is not meant for the select few — the saint or the seer only; it is meant for all. I have described myself as a scavenger having become one, not only in name but in fact, while I was in Phoenix. It was there that I took up the bucket and the broom, impelled by the inner urge to identify myself with the lowest of the low. As a humble fellow toiler, then, let me bear witness that any one, even a simple-minded villager who wants to and tries, can attain the state of mental equipoise described in the Gita verses which are recited at the prayer. We all lose our sanity at times, though we may not care to admit it or be even aware of it. A man with a steady mind will never lose patience, even with a child, or indulge in anger or abuse. Religion as taught in the Gita is a thing to be practised in this life. It is not a means for attaining merit in the next irrespective of what you may do here. That would be a negation of religion.

"For me the visit to the I.N.A. men in detention was a matter of pure duty. It gave me supreme satisfaction to be able to meet them, and they on their part received me with a warmth of affection which I shall always treasure.

I have interpreted their welcome as a token of their recognition in me of a devoted servant of the country.

"Netaji was like a son to me. I came to know him as a lieutenant full of promise under the late Deshabandhu Das. His last message to the I.N.A. was that, whilst on foreign soil they had fought with arms, on their return to India they would have to serve the country as soldiers of non-violence under the guidance and leadership of the Congress. The message which the I.N.A. has for India is not adoption of the method of appeal to arms for settling disputes (it has been tried and found wanting), but of cultivating non-violence, unity, cohesion and organization.

"Though the I.N.A. failed in their immediate objective they have a lot to their credit of which they might well be proud. Greatest among these was to gather together under one banner men from all religions and races of India and to infuse into them the spirit of solidarity and oneness to the utter exclusion of all communal or parochial sentiment. It is an example which we should all emulate. If they did this under the glamour and romance of fighting, it was not much. It must persist in peace. It is a higher and more difficult work. We have to die performing our duty and without killing. For that we shall need to cultivate the attributes of a *sthitaprajna* as set forth in the Gita.

"Far more potent than the strength of the sword is the strength of Satyagraha. I said so to the I.N.A. men and they were happy to tell me, as I was to hear, that they had realized this and would hereafter strive to serve India as true soldiers of non-violence under the Congress flag."

New Delhi, 8-4-'46

*Harijan*, 14-4-1946

## A MESSAGE FOR THE I.N.A.

The other day I was talking to the I.N.A. men in the Red Fort. We were discussing as to what they should do on their release. They assured me that they would on their release serve India as true soldiers of non-violence under the Congress flag. I told them that today a true soldier of India is he who spins to clothe the naked and tills the soil to grow more food to meet the threatening food crisis. The Congress has declared that it would carry on the struggle for India's independence through the method of non-violence. But it has not yet decided whether it would adhere to that method for the protection of that freedom against possible foreign aggression. To me it is a self-evident truth that if freedom is to be shared equally by all — even physically the weakest, the lame and the halt — they must be able to contribute an equal share in its defence. How that can be possible when reliance is placed on armaments, my plebeian mind fails to understand. I therefore, swear and shall continue to swear by non-violence, i.e. by Satyagraha or soul force. In it physical incapacity is no handicap and even a frail woman or a child can pit herself or himself on equal terms against a giant, armed with the most powerful weapons.

The eighteen-fold constructive programme with the spinning wheel as its centre is the concrete expression of that spirit in organized society. Let us realize that spirit by devoting ourselves prayerfully to the carrying out of the constructive programme during the National Week.

For the I.N.A. men there were two alternatives. They could serve free India as soldiers-in-arms or they could convert themselves into soldiers of non-violence if they were convinced that non-violence was the higher and the more efficacious way. They should make use of their training and discipline to introduce non-violent organization among the masses, learn spinning and become veteran constructive

workers. If they did that they would set a glorious example to the whole world.

"The I.N.A. men," observed Gandhiji, "have shown great strength, heroism and resourcefulness. But I must confess that their achievements have not dazzled my eyes. To die without killing requires more heroism. There is nothing very wonderful in killing and being killed in the process. But the man who offers his neck to the enemy for execution but refuses to bend to his will shows courage of a far higher type.

"Troublous times lie ahead of us. Our non-violence has brought us to the gate of independence. Shall we renounce it after we have entered that gate? I for one am firmly convinced that non-violence of the brave, such as I have envisaged, provides the surest and most efficacious means to face foreign aggression and internal disorder just as it has done for winning independence." The British were going to quit. What place would India have in the comity of nations? Would she be satisfied with being a fifth-rate power like China? China was independent only in name. India would have long to wait before she could become a first-class military power. "And for that she would have to go under the tutelage of some Western power. A truly non-violent India will have nothing to fear from any foreign power nor will she look to British navy and air force for her defence. I know that we have not as yet the non-violence of the brave."

New Delhi, 16-4-'46

*Harijan*, 21-4-1946



## I. N. A. MEN'S DILEMMA

Between 50 to 60 senior officers of the I.N.A. met Gandhiji in the Sweepers' Colony the other day during his stay in Delhi. They first sang in a chorus the I.N.A. Hindustani adaptation of Gurudev's song "*Janaganamana adhinayaka jaya he Bharata bhagyavidhata*" just as they had sung during Gandhiji's visit to them behind the barbed wire fence in the Kabul Lines when their fate still hung in the balance. Gandhiji then addressed them a few words in Hindustani.

"Other friends have placed before me," he began, "the dilemma which, I am told, faces many of you too. The Congress creed is, of course, that of winning Swaraj through non-violence and peaceful means but there are many men outside, and even within the Congress, who have begun to doubt whether that policy of the Congress has not exhausted its purpose and now become effete for the task that lies ahead, specially in view of the changed and changing times.

"You, who have served under Subhas Babu as veteran fighters, have proved your mettle on the battlefield. Success and failure are, however, not in our hands, but in God's hands alone. Netaji told you when bidding good-bye to you that, on your return to India, you must put yourselves under the Congress discipline and act according to its policy. Your object, as I have been told, was only to free India, never to help the Japanese. You failed in your direct objective, i.e. to defeat the British. But you have the satisfaction that the whole country has been roused and even the regular forces have been stirred into a new political consciousness and have begun to think in terms of independence. You have achieved a complete unity among the Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, Anglo-Indians and Sikhs in your ranks. That is no mean achievement. What, however, you realized under conditions of freedom outside India, you have now to sustain and keep alive under Indian conditions. That will be your real test.

"If you have imbibed the spirit of non-violence, you will remain free men at heart even here. For instance, no government on earth can make men, who have realized freedom in their hearts, salute against their will. If they threaten to kill them they will offer their necks to them, but refuse to submit. The odds are that a soldier's spirit will revolt against such cold-blooded murder. Thus, whether they live or die it will be as free men. They will never be slaves. If you all become free men at heart, the whole of India will be free. They might imprison you. You will welcome it or you can tell them that you will be a corpse before they can put you into prison. Both alternatives are open to a non-violent soldier and both call for bravery of the highest order. Our task is no less than to reinfuse life into the 400 millions of India. We have to dispel fear from their hearts. On the day they shed all fear, India's fetters shall fall and she will be free. .

"Years ago I said at Nankanasahib: 'Sikhs have given proof of their martial valour. But the consummation of Guru Govind Singh's ideal will be reached only when they will substitute for their *kirpans* the sword of the spirit of non-violence.' So long as one wants to retain one's sword, one has not attained complete fearlessness. No power on earth can subjugate you when you are armed with the sword of Ahimsa. It ennobles both the victor and the vanquished. Netaji has fired you with a new spirit. That spirit can now be kept alive only through non-violence."

Having thus explained to them the significance of Ahimsa in terms of martial courage, Gandhiji proceeded to place before them the higher type of courage that is required of a Satyagrahi soldier to become an ideal, self-respecting citizen. "Above all, you must never beg or throw yourselves on anybody's charity. Because you have risked your lives for India's sake and fought for her on the Imphal plain, you must not expect to be pampered in return. If you do that, you will lose all worth like the salt that has lost its savour. You should prefer to earn your bread by the sweat of your brow, but refuse to beg or accept charity. In short, you have to show the same degree of

bravery and courage of the non-violent type as you have done in the use of arms hitherto.

"If you want land you will have it. You will clear it and turn it into model farms. You have to overcome the inertia of ages which weighs down our masses. That you will be able to do only by setting an example of industry and hard work. You must be able to wield the bucket and the broom with skill and diligence and not consider the cleaning of latrines as dirty or beneath your dignity. Graduation in this work is more heroic than winning the Victoria Cross."

Then followed questions and answers:

*Q.* How can one who has spent his whole life in fighting take to Ahimsa with success? Are not the two incompatible?

*A.* I do not agree. Badshah Khan is a Pathan. But today he has become a soldier of non-violence. Tolstoy too served in the army. Yet he became the high priest of non-violence in Europe. We have not yet realized fully the power that is in non-violence. If the Government had not arrested me in 1942, I would have shown how to fight Japan by non-violence.

*Q.* Surely, it is no breach of Ahimsa to use the sword in self-defence?

*A.* Even Wavell, Auchinleck or Hitler does not use the sword without necessity. But that does not make it Ahimsa. It is Himsa, whatever its justification.

*Q.* You cannot take the world along with you if you adopt Ahimsa. You have to choose the one or the other.

*A.* There again I disagree. A reformer has to sail not with the current, very often he has to go against it, even though it may cost him his life. You must not be carried off your feet by unthinking, popular applause. The essential part of your message to the country is not how to wield the sword but to cease to be afraid of it.

*Q.* What would you have done if Subhas Babu had returned to you victorious?

*A.* I would have asked him to make you put away your weapons and stack them before me.

Mussoorie, 30-5-'46

*Harijan*, 9-6-1946

## NOT LONELY

Mutual trust and mutual love are no trust and no love. The real love is to love them that hate you, to love your neighbour even though you distrust him. I have sound reasons for distrusting the English official world. If my love is sincere, I must love the Englishman in spite of my distrust. Of what avail is my love, if it be only so long as I trust my friend? Even thieves do that. They become enemies immediately the trust is gone.

I am unable to think that the incendiarism, the looting, the insults heaped upon Englishmen are or were acts of hooligans. Who are hooligans? Will there be none when English rule is no more? The fashion of blaming the hooligan ought to be given up. We are the makers of the brand. They respond to the air about them.

Imagine the senselessness of looting grain shops. The looters did not help themselves. Even if they did, they were not starving. The grain was meant for the starving. If it was being misused, looting could not prevent that misuse. Usurpers will always replace the looted grain while there is any to usurp. Between the two sets of looters the starving will be more starved than before.

They who incited the mutineers did not know what they were doing. The latter were bound to submit ultimately. Or, was it meant as a lesson in violence? That is not the way to understand history.

I ask myself, and perhaps others are asking, why I am not repeating what I did after Chauri Chaura. I have no call in that direction. When or if it comes, nothing in the world will prevent me, ill or well. Let me re-affirm the truth that I love the Englishman as well as the Indian. Both are humans. Yet I want the rule of and for the masses of India. Lokamanya has taught us that Home Rule or Swaraj is their birth right. That Swaraj is not to be obtained by what is going on now in Bombay, Calcutta and Karachi.

Let every Congressman, whether four-anna member or not, think for himself where Congress should stand. Let us not deceive ourselves and the world.

Poona, 24-2-'46

*Harijan*, 3-3-1946

## 80

## STATEMENT ON GENERAL AVARI'S FAST

Letters and wires continue to come to me seeking my aid in saving General Avari's life which seems now to be sinking. I know Gen. Avari. He is a lovable worker. But I know too that he is often improperly obstinate. The present occasion is a case in point. If a man however popular and great he may be, takes up an improper cause and fasts in defence of the impropriety, it is the duty of his friends (among whom I count myself), fellow workers and relatives to let him die rather than that an improper cause should triumph so that he may live. Fairest means cease to be fair when the end sought is unfair. Let me say once more where Gen. Avari's end is improper and unfair. He may be wholly right in his statement that a great wrong has been perpetrated by the Central Parliamentary Board of the Congress. But who can right the wrong? Not Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as Gen. Avari tells me he can. He is but an individual, Sardar though he is. He has pronounced the decision of the Board. A judge cannot review his own judgment. The Sardar is out of the picture. The Central Board cannot, must not, review its own judgment. It has no authority. No institution can act capriciously in a well managed democracy. Gen. Avari and his friends have the right of appeal or review by the Working Committee, then the A. I. C. C., finally the Congress. This procedure may appear to him too long. It is not, unless he is fighting for an individual or individuals and not for a principle as he assures me he is doing. Time always runs in favour of the defence of a principle. If the general session of the Congress which is the highest tribunal for vindicating justice decides against Gen. Avari, he has to submit to its verdict. The



Congress is the Panchayat. Like the king it can do no wrong. This is merely a necessary and legitimate conception for guidance in the observance of an infallible duty. In truth, however, decisions of human organizations in all climes have been sometimes found to be wrong. So it may be in the case under discussion. Then, but not till then, will Gen. Avari have in theory the right, if he chooses to exercise it, to stir public conscience into action by a fast to the finish. In practice, it will be ludicrous. For the principle behind such action can only euphemistically be so called. In democracy even pure men may unconsciously give wrong decisions. The remedy is more and purer education, greater awakening of the public and in such quickened atmosphere the rise of a number of public workers whose sole duty will be to speak, write and act so as to serve as bright examples for the public.

Now I hope the friends of Gen. Avari will understand me when I say that those who wrongly support him and his fast and thus encourage him will hasten Gen. Avari's death, not those who will not swerve from well-recognized canons of justice even for the sake of saving the life of an erring friend. Let justice triumph though the heavens weep.

Poona, 7-3-'46

*Harijan*, 17-3-1946

## FASTING IN THE AIR

"Fasting has become a veritable epidemic. The blame lies at your door." So writes a correspondent and adds: "One can understand the efficacy of a fast for purposes of inward purification as also for the outward. But fasts are undertaken nowadays for an increment in one's own pay or in that of one's group, for being selected as a candidate for the Assembly or for various other causes. You encourage one man for fasting for the removal of untouchability and yet you are willing to let another die who is doing the same for a different cause. Is this not injustice? Should you not lay down rules as to when to fast and when not to, what should be its duration, should fruit juices be taken or only water? You talk of

the inner voice where you are concerned. Would it not really be best if you were to stop undertaking fasts yourself and stop others too?"

There is force in the above argument. It is, however, impossible to lay down rules. Experience alone can suggest rules. In particular cases it is open to a person to frame his own law or he can refer to me, if he believes me to be an authority.

One general principle, however, I would like to enunciate. A Satyagrahi should fast only as a last resort when all other avenues of redress have been explored and have failed. There is no room for imitation in fasts. He who has no inner strength should not dream of it, and never with attachment to success. But if a Satyagrahi once undertakes a fast from conviction, he must stick to his resolve whether there is a chance of his action bearing fruit or not. This does not mean that fasting cannot or can bear fruit. He who fasts in the expectation of fruit generally fails. And even if he does not seemingly fail, he loses all the inner joy which a true fast holds.

Whether one should take fruit juices or not depends on one's physical powers of endurance. But no more fruit juice than is absolutely necessary for the body should be taken. He probably has the greatest inner strength who takes only water.

It is wrong to fast for selfish ends, e.g. for increase in one's own salary. Under certain circumstances it is permissible to fast for an increase in wages on behalf of one's group.

Ridiculous fasts spread like plague and are harmful. But when fasting becomes a duty it cannot be given up. Therefore I do fast when I consider it to be necessary and cannot abstain from it on any score. What I do myself I cannot prevent others from doing under similar circumstances. It is common knowledge that the best of good things are often abused. We see this happening everyday.

New Delhi, 13-4-'46

*Harijan*, 21-4-1946

## PRESS STATEMENTS

## I

I have followed the events now happening in India with painful interest. This mutiny in the Navy and what is following is not, in any sense of the term, non-violent action. Inasmuch as a single person is compelled to shout *Jai Hind* or any popular slogan, a nail is driven into the coffin of Swaraj in terms of the dumb millions of India. Destruction of churches and the like is not the way to Swaraj as defined by the Congress. Burning of tramcars and other property, insulting and injuring Europeans, is not non-violence of the Congress type, much less mine, if and in so far as it may be different from the Congress. Let the known and unknown leaders of this thoughtless orgy of violence know what they are doing and then follow their bent. Let it not be said that India of the Congress spoke to the world of winning Swaraj through non-violent action and belied her word in action and that too at the critical period in her life. I have deliberately used the adjective "thoughtless". For, there is such a thing as thoughtful violent action. What I see happening now is not thoughtful. If the Indian member of the Navy know and appreciate non-violence, the way of non-violent resistance can be dignified, manly and wholly effective, if it is corporate. For the individual it always is. Why should they continue to serve if service is humiliating for them or India? Action like this I have called non-violent non-co-operation. As it is, they are setting a bad and unbecoming example for India.

A combination between Hindus and Muslims and others for the purpose of violent action is unholy and will lead to and probably is a preparation for mutual violence—bad for India and the world.

The rulers have declared their intention to 'quit' in favour of Indian rule. Let the action be not delayed by a moment because of the exhibition of distressful unrest which

has been lying hidden in the breast. Their might is unquestioned. Its use beyond the bare requirement will be unworthy and even wicked if it is made to suppress the people or a portion of them. The people have been far too long under the foreign heel.

Poona, 23-2-'46

*Harijan*, 3-3-1946

## II

I congratulate Shrimati Aruna Asaf Ali on her courageous refutation of my statement on the happenings in Bombay. Except for the fact that she represents not only herself but also a fairly large body of underground workers, I would not have noticed her refutation, if only because she is a daughter of mine — not less so because not born to me or because she is a rebel. I had the pleasure of meeting her on several occasions while she was underground. I admired her bravery, resourcefulness and burning love of the country. But my admiration stopped there. I did not like her being underground. I do not appreciate any underground activity. I know that millions cannot go underground. Millions need not. A select few may fancy that they will bring Swaraj to the millions by secretly directing their activity. Will this not be spoon-feeding? Only open challenge and open activity is for all to follow. Real Swaraj *must* be felt by all — man, woman and child. To labour for that consummation is true revolution. India has become a pattern for all exploited races of the earth, because India's has been an open, unarmed effort which demands sacrifice from all without inflicting injury on the usurper. The millions in India would not have been awakened but for the open, unarmed struggle. Every deviation from the straight path has meant a temporary arrest of the evolutionary revolution.

I do not read the 1942 events as does the brave lady. It was good that the people rose spontaneously. It was bad that some or many resorted to violence. It makes no difference that Shri Kishorlal Mashruwala, Kakasaheb and other workers, in their impatient zeal for the moment, misinterpreted non-violence. That they did so, only shows

how delicate an instrument non-violence is. My analogy is not meant to cast any reflection on any person. Everyone acted as he or she thought best. Supineness in the face of overwhelming organized violence would have meant cowardice. I would be weak and wrong if I failed to give my estimate of the doings of 1942.

Aruna would "rather unite Hindus and Muslims at the barricade than on the constitution front." Even in terms of violence, this is a misleading proposition. If the union at the barricade is honest, there must be union at the constitutional front. Fighters do not always live at the barricade. They are too wise to commit suicide. The barricade life has always to be followed by the constitutional. That front is not taboo for ever.

It is a matter of great relief that the ratings have listened to Sardar Patel's advice to surrender. They have not surrendered their honour. So far as I can see, in resorting to mutiny they were badly advised. If it was for grievance, fancied or real, they should have waited for the guidance and intervention of political leaders of their choice. If they mutinied for the freedom of India they were doubly wrong. They could not do so without a call from a prepared revolutionary party. They were thoughtless and ignorant if they believed that by their might, they would deliver India from foreign domination.

Aruna is right when she says that the fighters this time showed grit as never before. But grit becomes foolhardiness when it is untimely and suicidal as this was.

She is entitled to say that the people "are not interested in the ethics of violence or non-violence", but the people are very much interested in knowing the way which will bring freedom to the masses — violence or non-violence. The people have, however imperfectly, hitherto gone the way of non-violence. Aruna and her comrades have to ask themselves every time whether the non-violent way has or has not raised India from her slumber of ages and created in them a yearning, very vague perhaps, for Swaraj. There is, in my opinion, only one answer.

Poona, 26-2-'46

*Harijan*, 3-3-1946



## FRUITS OF VIOLENCE

"Look at Italy," said Gandhiji the other day to a friend who would have independence at all costs. "Garibaldi was a great man. He brought deliverance to Italy. And Mussolini did make her look great. But where is she today? Look at Japan, look at Germany. The very violence which brought them to the pinnacle of power has razed them to the ground. And has not the atom bomb proved the futility of all violence? And yet we are crazy enough to think that we can win Swaraj by breaking a few skulls and destroying property which, after all is said and done, is our own." Needless to say that all these happenings have filled him with unspeakable anguish. But he is an irrepressible optimist. "I am sure, out of this orgy of violence the people will learn the lesson of non-violence," he remarked. The sense of oppression and misery that he feels at what is happening is so great that only his unquenchable faith in the God of Truth and Non-violence could sustain him.

Poona, 3-3-'46

*Harijan*, 10-3-1946

## FOR SHAME!

**No Moral Alibis**

"It has become the fashion these days to ascribe all such ugly manifestations to the activities of hooligans. It hardly becomes us to take refuge in that moral alibi. Who are the hooligans after all? They are our own countrymen and so long as any countryman of ours indulges in such acts we cannot disown responsibility for them consistently with our claim that we are one people. It matters little whether those who were responsible for the happenings are denounced as *goondas* or praised as patriots — praise and blame must equally belong to us all. The only manly and becoming course for those who are aspiring to be free is to accept either whilst doing our duty.

### **"The Way of the Lord"**

"In eating, sleeping and in the performance of other physical functions, man is not different from the brute. What distinguishes him from the brute is his ceaseless striving to rise above the brute on the moral plane. Mankind is at the cross roads. It has to make its choice between the law of the jungle and the law of humanity. We in India deliberately adopted the latter twenty-five years back, but I am afraid that whilst we profess to follow the higher way, our practice has not always conformed to our profession. We have always proclaimed from the housetops that non-violence is the way of the brave but there are some amongst us who have brought Ahimsa into disrepute by using it as a weapon of the weak. In my opinion, to remain a passive spectator of the kind of crimes that Bombay has witnessed of late is cowardice. Let me say in all humility that Ahimsa belongs to the brave. Pritam has sung: 'The way of the Lord is for the brave, not for the coward.' By the way of the Lord is here meant the way of non-violence and truth. I have said before that I do not envisage God other than truth and non-violence. If you have accepted the doctrine of Ahimsa without a full realization of its implications you are at liberty to repudiate it. I believe in confessing one's mistakes and correcting them. Such confession strengthens one and purifies the soul. Ahimsa calls for the strength and courage to suffer without retaliation, to receive blows without returning any. But that does not exhaust its meaning. Silence becomes cowardice when occasion demands speaking out the whole truth and acting accordingly. We have to cultivate that courage, if we are to win India's independence through truth and non-violence as proclaimed by the Congress. It is an ideal worth living for and dying for. Every one of you who has accepted that ideal should feel that inasmuch as a single English woman or child is assaulted it is a challenge to your creed of non-violence and you should protect the threatened victim even at the cost of your life. Then alone you will have the right to sing 'The way of the Lord is for the brave, not for the coward.' To attack defenceless English women and children because one has a grievance against

the present Government hardly becomes a human being."

*Harijan, 7-4-1946*

## 85

## THE NON-VIOLENT SANCTION

*Q.* What is the place of Satyagraha in making the rich realize their duty towards the poor?

*A.* The same as against the foreign power. Satyagraha is a law of universal application. Beginning with the family its use can be extended to every other circle. Suppose a landowner exploits his tenants and mulcts them of the fruit of their toil by appropriating it to his own use. When they expostulate with him he does not listen and raises objections that he requires so much for his wife, so much for his children and so on. The tenants or those who have espoused their cause and have influence will make an appeal to his wife to expostulate with her husband. She would probably say that for herself she does not need his exploited money. The children will say likewise that they would earn for themselves what they need.

Supposing further that he listens to nobody or that his wife and children combine against the tenants, they will not submit. They will quit if asked to do so but they will make it clear that the land belongs to him who tills it. The owner cannot till all the land himself and he will have to give in to their just demands. It may, however, be that the tenants are replaced by others. Agitation short of violence will then continue till the replacing tenants see their error and make common cause with the evicted tenants. Thus Satyagraha is a process of educating public opinion, such that it covers all the elements of society and in the end makes itself irresistible. Violence interrupts the process and prolongs the real revolution of the whole social structure.

The conditions necessary for the success of Satyagraha are: (1) The Satyagrahi should not have any hatred in his heart against the opponent. (2) The issue must be true

and substantial. (3) The Satyagrahi must be prepared to suffer till the end.

Poona, 4-3-'46

*Harijan*, 31-3-1946

86

## SATYAGRAHA — THE ART OF LIVING AND DYING

“The root of Satyagraha is in prayer. A Satyagrahi relies upon God for protection against the tyranny of brute force. Why should you then be always afraid of the British or anybody playing you false? If someone deceives you, he will be the loser. The fight of Satyagraha is for the strong in spirit, not the doubter or the timid. Satyagraha teaches us the art of living as well as dying. Birth and death are inevitable among mortals. What distinguishes the man from the brute is his conscious striving to realize the spirit within. The last eighteen verses of the second chapter of the Gita which are recited at the prayer give in a nutshell the secret of the art of living. It is given there in the form of a description of a *sthitaprajna* or the man of steady wisdom, i.e. a Satyagrahi, in reply to Arjun’s query to Lord Krishna.

“The art of dying follows as a corollary from the art of living. Death must come to all. A man may die of a lightning stroke or as a result of heart failure or failure of respiration. But that is not the death that a Satyagrahi can wish for or pray for himself. The art of dying for a Satyagrahi consists in facing death cheerfully in the performance of one’s duty. That is an art which the people of Bombay apparently have not yet learnt. It is not enough not to want to hurt or take the life of your enemy. You are no Satyagrahi if you remain silent or passive spectators while your enemy is being done to death. You must protect him even at the cost of your life. If thousands in India learnt that art, the face of India would be changed and no one would be able to point his finger of scorn at her non-violence as being a cloak for weakness. We would not then try to shift blame for ugly happenings on the hooligan

elements. We would convert and control the hooligan elements too."

Uruli, 24-3-'46

*Harijan*, 7-4-1946

## 87

## IS EATING FISH VIOLENCE?

Q. You say that those who eat fish should be provided with it. Does not this entail violence both for him who eats and him who provides the fish?

A. Both commit violence. So do those who eat vegetables. This kind of violence is inherent in all embodied life, therefore, in man too. It is in this condition and in spite of it that we have to practise non-violence as a duty. I have often indicated how we may do so. The man who coerces another not to eat fish commits more violence than he who eats it. Fishermen, fish vendors and fish eaters are probably unaware of any violence in their action. Even if they were they might look upon it as unavoidable. But the man who uses coercion is guilty of deliberate violence. Coercion is inhuman. Those who quarrel among themselves, those who will stoop to anything in order to amass wealth, those who exploit or indulge in forced human labour, those who overload or goad or otherwise torture animals, all these knowingly commit such violence as can easily be stopped. I do not consider it violence to permit the fish eater to eat fish. It is my duty to suffer it. Ahimsa is the highest duty. Even if we cannot practise it in full, we must try to understand its spirit and refrain as far as is humanly possible from violence.

Bombay, 11-3-'46

*Harijan*, 24-3-1946



## RELIGION V. NO RELIGION

A correspondent writes:

"In the *Harijanbandhu* of the 5th May you have written that your non-violence contemplates destruction of animals dangerous to mankind, such as leopards, wolves, snakes, scorpions etc.

"You do not believe in giving food to dogs etc. Several other people besides the Gujaratis look upon the feeding of dogs as a meritorious act. Such a belief may not be justifiable in times of food shortage like the present. Yet we must remember that these animals can be very useful to man. One can feed them and take work out of them.

"You had put 27 questions to Shri Raichandbhai from Durban. One of these questions was: 'What should a seeker do when a snake attacks him?' His answer was: 'He should not kill the snake and, if it bites, he should let it do so.' How is it that you speak differently now?"

I have written a lot on this subject in the past. At that time the topic was the killing of rabid dogs. There was much discussion on the subject but all that seems to have been forgotten.

My non-violence is not merely kindness to all living creatures. The emphasis laid on the sacredness of sub-human life in Jainism is understandable. But that can never mean that one is to be kind to this life in preference to human life. While writing about the sacredness of such life, I take it that the sacredness of human life has been taken for granted. The former has been over-emphasized. And, while putting it into practice, the idea has undergone distortion. For instance, there are many who derive complete satisfaction in feeding ants. It would appear that the theory has become a wooden, lifeless dogma. Hypocrisy and distortion are passing current under the name of religion.

Ahimsa is the highest ideal. It is meant for the brave, never for the cowardly. To benefit by others' killing and delude oneself into the belief that one is being very religious and non-violent, is sheer self-deception.

A so-called votary of non-violence will not stay in a village which is visited by a leopard everyday. He will run away and, when someone has killed the leopard, will return to take charge of his hearth and home. This is not non-violence. This is a coward's violence. The man who has killed the leopard has at least given proof of some bravery. The man who takes advantage of the killing is a coward. He can never expect to know true non-violence.

In life it is impossible to eschew violence completely. The question arises, where is one to draw the line? The line cannot be the same for everyone. Although essentially the principle is the same, yet everyone applies it in his or her own way. What is one man's food can be another's poison. Meat-eating is a sin for me. Yet, for another person, who has always lived on meat and never seen anything wrong in it, to give it up simply in order to copy me will be a sin.

If I wish to be an agriculturist and stay in the jungle, I will have to use the minimum unavoidable violence in order to protect my fields. I will have to kill monkeys, birds and insects which eat up my crops. If I do not wish to do so myself, I will have to engage someone to do it for me. There is not much difference between the two. To allow crops to be eaten up by animals in the name of Ahimsa while there is a famine in the land is certainly a sin. Evil and good are relative terms. What is good under certain conditions can become an evil or a sin under a different set of conditions.

Man is not to drown himself in the well of Shastras but he is to dive in their broad ocean and bring out pearls. At every step he has to use his discrimination as to what is Ahimsa and what is Himsa. In this there is no room for shame or cowardice. The poet has said that the road leading up to God is for the brave, never for the cowardly.

Finally, Raichandbhai's advice to me was that if I had courage, if I wanted to see God face to face, I should let myself be bitten by a snake instead of killing it. I have never killed a snake before or after receiving that letter. That is no matter of credit for me. My ideal is to be able

to play with snakes and scorpions fearlessly. But it is merely a wish so far. Whether and when it will be realized I do not know. Everywhere I have let my people kill both. I could have prevented them if I had wished. But how could I? I did not have the courage to take them up with my own hands and teach my companions a lesson in fearlessness. I am ashamed that I could not do so. But my shame could not benefit them or me.

If Ramanama favours me I might still attain that courage some day. In the meantime, I consider it my duty to act as I have stated above. Religion is a thing to be lived. It is not mere sophistry.

Mussoorie, 29-5-'46

*Harijan*, 9-6-1946

89

## DIFFERENCES WITH THE SOCIALISTS

Q. What is the difference between your technique and that of the communists or socialists for realizing the goal of economic equality?

A. The socialists and communists say they can do nothing to bring about economic equality today. They will just carry on propaganda in its favour and to that end they believe in generating and accentuating hatred. They say, when they get control over the State they will enforce equality. Under my plan the State will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate to them or force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view but will straightaway make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about economic equality of my conception, if I am the owner of fifty motor cars or even of ten *bighas* of land. For that I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. That is what I have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so I claim to be a foremost communist although I make use of cars and

other facilities offered to me by the rich. They have no hold on me and I can shed them at a moment's notice, if the interests of the masses demand it.

Poona, 4-3-'46

*Harijan*, 31-3-1946

## 90

## SWEEPERS' STRIKE

There are certain matters in which strikes would be wrong. Sweepers' grievances come in this category. I do not want to go into others here. My opinion against sweepers' strikes dates back to about 1897 when I was in Durban. A general strike was mooted there and the question arose as to whether scavengers should join in it. My vote was registered against the proposal. Just as man cannot live without air, so too he cannot exist for long if his home and surroundings are not clean. One or other epidemic is bound to break out especially when modern drainage is put out of action.

An impartial tribunal for settling disputes should always be accepted. Refusal is a sign of weakness. A Bhangi may not give up his work even for a day. And there are many other ways open to him of securing justice.

Townpeople should, on the other hand, forget that there is such a thing as untouchability and learn the art of cleaning their own and the city's drains, so that if a similar occasion arises, they are not nonplussed and can render the necessary temporary service. They may not be coerced. I go so far as to say that the military who know this work should be used for such emergency. If Swaraj is round the bend, we can now look upon the military as ours and need have no hesitation in taking all the constructive work we can from them. Up till now they have only been employed in indiscriminate firing on us. Today they must plough the land, dig wells, clean latrines and do every other constructive work that they can, and thus turn the people's hatred of them into love.

New Delhi, 15-4-'46

*Harijan*, 21-4-1946

## PEACEFUL STRIKES

*Q.* How should a strike be conducted so that hooliganism and violence are avoided?

*A.* A strike should be spontaneous and not manipulated. If it is organized without any compulsion there would be no chance for goondaism and looting. Such a strike would be characterized by perfect co-operation amongst the strikers. It should be peaceful and there should be no show of force. The strikers should take up some work either singly or in co-operation with each other, in order to earn their bread. The nature of such work should have been thought out beforehand. It goes without saying that in a peaceful, effective and firm strike of this character, there will be no room for rowdyism or looting. I have known of such strikes. I have not presented a Utopian picture.

New Delhi, 26-5-'46

*Harijan*, 2-6-1946

## STRIKES

Obviously there should be no strike which is not justifiable on merits. No unjust strike should succeed. All public sympathy must be withheld from such strikes.

The public has no means of judging the merits of a strike, unless it is backed by impartial persons enjoying public confidence. Interested men cannot judge the merits of their own case. Hence, there must be an arbitration accepted by the parties or a judicial adjudication. As a rule, the matter does not come before the public when there is accepted arbitration or adjudication. Cases have, however, happened when haughty employers have ignored awards, or misguided employees, conscious of their power to assert themselves, have done likewise and have decided upon forcible extortion.

Strikes for economic betterment should never have a political end as an ulterior motive. Such a mixture never



advances the political end and generally brings trouble upon strikers, even when they do not dislocate public life, as in the case of public utility services, such as the postal strike. The Government may suffer some inconvenience, but will not come to a standstill. Rich persons will put up expensive postal services but the vast mass of the poor people will be deprived during such a strike of a convenience of primary importance to which they have become used for generations. Such strikes can only take place when every other legitimate means has been adopted and failed.

Sympathetic strikes must be taboo until it is conclusively proved that the affected men have exhausted all the legitimate means at their disposal.

One hears of strikes all over the country to paralyse the Government. This paralysis is an extreme political step, open only to a body like the Congress, not even to unions, however powerful they may be. If the Congress is the people's arm *par excellence* for the purpose of winning independence, paralysing action should be retained solely in the hands of the Congress.

It follows from the foregoing that political strikes must be treated on their own merits and must never be mixed with or related to economic strikes. Political strikes have a definite place in non-violent action. They are never taken up haphazard. They must be open, never led by goondaism. They are calculated never to lead to violence.

Uruli-Kanchan, 3-8-'46

*Harijan*, 11-8-1946

## NON-VIOLENT STRIKES

"Strikes have today become a universal plague," Gandhiji replied. "There are strikes everywhere, America and England not excepted. But in India they have a special significance. We are living under an unnatural condition. As soon as the lid is removed and there is a crevice letting in the fresh air of freedom, there will be an increasing number of strikes. The fundamental reason for this

spreading strike fever is that life here as elsewhere, is today uprooted from its basis, the basis of religion, and what an English writer has called 'cash nexus' has taken its place. And that is a precarious bond. But even when the religious basis is there, there will be strikes, because it is scarcely conceivable that religion will have become for all the basis of life. So, there will be attempts at exploitation on the one hand, and strikes on the other. But these strikes will then be of a purely non-violent character. Such strikes never do harm to anyone. It was such a strike perhaps that brought General Smuts to his knees. 'If you had hurt an Englishman,' said Jan. Smuts, 'I would have shot you, even deported your people. As it is, I have put you in prison and tried to subdue you and your people in every way. But how long can I go on like this when you do not retaliate?' And so he had to come to terms with a mere *coolie* on behalf of *coolies* as all Indians were then called in South Africa."

New Delhi, 16-9-'46

*Harijan*, 22-9-1946

## \* NON-VIOLENT VOLUNTEER CORPS

Some time ago an attempt was made, at my instance, to form *shanti dals* but nothing came of it. This lesson, however, was learnt that the membership, in its very nature, of such organizations could not be large. Ordinarily, the efficient running of a large volunteer corps based on force implies the possibility of the use of force in the event of breach of discipline. In such bodies little or no stress is laid on a man's character. Physique is the chief factor. The contrary must obtain in non-violent bodies in which character or soul force must mean everything and physique must take second place. It is difficult to find many such persons. That is why non-violent corps must be small, if they are to be efficient. Such brigades may be

scattered all over; there may be one each for a village or a *mohalla*. The members must know one another well. Each corps will select its own head. All the members will have the same status, but where everyone is doing the same work there must be one person under whose discipline all must come, or else the work will suffer. Where there are two or more brigades the leaders must consult among themselves and decide on a common line of action. In that way alone lies success.

If non-violent volunteer corps are formed on the above lines, they can easily stop trouble. These corps will not require all the physical training given in *akhadas*, but a certain part of it will be necessary.

One thing, however, should be common to members of all such organizations and that is implicit faith in God. He is the only companion and doer. Without faith in Him these peace brigades will be lifeless. By whatever name one calls God, one must realize that one can only work through His strength. Such a man will never take another's life. He will allow himself, if need be, to be killed and thereby live through his victory over death.

The mind of the man in whose life the realization of this law has become a living reality will not be bewildered in a crisis. He will instinctively know the right way to act.

In spite, however, of what I have said above I would like to give some rules culled from my own experience:

1. A volunteer may not carry any weapons.
2. The members of a corps must be easily recognizable.
3. Every volunteer must carry bandages, scissors, needle and thread, surgical knife etc. for rendering first aid.
4. He should know how to carry and remove the wounded.
5. He should know how to put out fires, how to enter a fire area without getting burnt, how to climb heights for rescue work and descend safely with or without his charge.

6. He should be well acquainted with all the residents of his locality. This is a service in itself.

7. He should recite Ramanama ceaselessly in his heart and persuade others who believe to do likewise.

There are many who, whether from mental laziness or from having fallen into a bad habit believe that God is and will help us unasked. Why then is it necessary to recite His name? It is true that if God is, He is irrespective of our belief. But realization of God is infinitely more than mere belief. That can come only by constant practice. This is true of all science. How much more true of the science of all sciences?

Man often repeats the name of God parrot-wise and expects fruit from so doing. The true seeker must have that living faith which will not only dispel the untruth of parrot-wise repetition from within him but also from the hearts of others.

New Delhi, 26-4-'46

*Harijan*, 5-5-1946

## 95

### INDEPENDENCE

Independence of my dream means Ramarajya, i.e. the Kingdom of God on earth. I do not know what it will be like in Heaven. I have no desire to know the distant scene. If the present is attractive enough, the future cannot be very unlike.

In concrete terms, then, the independence should be political, economic and moral.

'Political' necessarily means the removal of the control of the British army in every shape and form.

'Economic' means entire freedom from British capitalists and capital, as also their Indian counterpart. In other words, the humblest must feel equal to the tallest. This can take place only by capital or capitalists sharing their skill and capital with the lowliest and the least.

'Moral' means freedom from armed defence forces. My conception of Ramarajya excludes replacement of the British

army by a national army of occupation. A country that is governed by even its national army can never be morally free and, therefore, its so-called weakest member can never rise to his full moral height.

India will have to decide whether attempting to become a military power she would be content to become, at least for some years, a fifth-rate power in the world without a message in answer to the pessimism or whether she will by further refining and continuing her non-violent policy prove herself worthy of being the first nation in the world using her hard-won freedom for the delivery of the earth from the burden which is crushing her in spite of the so-called victory.

New Delhi, 29-4-'46

*Harijan*, 5-5-1946

## 96

### CERTAIN QUESTIONS

*Q 1.* Is it possible for a modern State (which is essentially based on force) to offer non-violent resistance for countering internal as well as external forces of disorder? Or is it necessary that people wanting to offer non-violent resistance should first of all divest themselves of State-authority and place themselves vis-a-vis the opponent entirely in a private capacity?

*A.* It is not possible for a modern State based on force, non-violently to resist forces of disorder, whether external or internal. A man cannot serve God and Mammon, nor be 'temperate and furious' at the same time. It is claimed that a State can be based on non-violence, i.e. it can offer non-violent resistance against a world combination based on armed force. Such a State was Ashoka's. The example can be repeated. But the case does not become weak even if it be shown that Ashoka's State was not based on non-violence. It has to be examined on its merits.

*Q. 2.* Do you think that it would be possible for a Congress government to deal with foreign aggression or internal riots in an entirely non-violent manner?



A. It is certainly possible for a Congress government to deal with "foreign aggression or internal riots" in a non-violent manner. That the Congress may not share my belief is quite possible. If the Congress changes its course, the change will prove nothing save that the non-violence hitherto offered was of the weak and that the Congress has no faith in State non-violence.

Q. 3. Does not the knowledge that the opponent is wedded to non-violence often encourage the bully?

A. The bully has his opportunity when he has to face non-violence of the weak. Non-violence of the strong is any day stronger than that of the bravest soldier fully armed or a whole host.

Q. 4. What policy would you advocate if a section of the Indian people tries to enforce by sword a selfish measure which is not only repugnant to others but also basically unjust? While it is possible for an unofficial organization to offer non-violent resistance in such a case, is it also possible for the government of the day to do so?

A. The question assumes a case which can never exist. A non-violent State must be broad-based on the will of an intelligent people, well able to know its mind and act up to it. In such a State the assumed section can only be negligible. It can never stand against the deliberate will of the overwhelming majority represented by the State. The government of the day is not outside the people. It is the will of the overwhelming majority. If it is expressed non-violently, it cannot be a majority of one but nearer 99 against 1 in a hundred.

Q. 5. Is not non-violent resistance by the militarily strong more effective than that by the militarily weak?

A. This is a contradiction in terms. There can be no non-violence offered by the militarily strong. Thus, Russia in order to express non-violence has to discard all her power of doing violence. What is true is that if those, who were at one time strong in armed might, change their mind, they will be better able to demonstrate their non-violence to the world and, therefore, also to their opponents. Those who are strong in non-violence will not mind whether they are opposed by the militarily weak people or the strongest.

Q. 6. Is it not better under existing circumstances that countries like India and England should maintain full military efficiency while resolving to give non-violent resistance a reasonable trial before taking any military step?

A. The foregoing answers should make it clear that under no circumstances can India and England give non-violent resistance a reasonable chance whilst they are both maintaining full military efficiency. At the same time it is perfectly true that all military powers carry on negotiations for peaceful adjustment of rival disputes. But here we are not discussing preliminary peace parleys before appealing to the arbitrament of war. We are discussing a final substitute for armed conflict called war, in naked terms mass murder.

Simla, 2-5-'46

*Harijan*, 12-5-1946

## ATOM BOMB AND AHIMSA

It has been suggested by American friends that the atom bomb will bring in Ahimsa as nothing else can. It will, if it is meant that its destructive power will so disgust the world that it will turn it away from violence for the time being. This is very like a man glutting himself with dainties to the point of nausea and turning away from them only to return with redoubled zeal after the effect of nausea is well over. Precisely in the same manner will the world return to violence with renewed zeal after the effect of disgust is worn out.

Often does good come out of evil. But that is God's, not man's plan. Man knows that only evil can come out of evil, as good out of good.

That atomic energy though harnessed by American scientists and army men for destructive purposes may be utilized by other scientists for humanitarian purposes is undoubtedly within the realm of possibility. But that is not what was meant by my American friends. They were not so simple as to put a question which connoted an obvious truth. An incendiary uses fire for his destructive and

nefarious purposes, a housewife makes daily use of it in preparing nourishing food for mankind.

So far as I can see, the atomic bomb has deadened the finest feeling that has sustained mankind for ages. There used to be the so-called laws of war which made it tolerable. Now we know the naked truth. War knows no law except that of might. The atom bomb brought an empty victory to the allied arms but it resulted for the time being in destroying the soul of Japan. What has happened to the soul of the destroying nation is yet too early to see. Forces of nature act in a mysterious manner. We can but solve the mystery by deducing the unknown result from the known results of similar event. A slave-holder cannot hold a slave without putting himself or his deputy in the cage holding the slave. Let no one run away with the idea that I wish to put in a defence of Japanese misdeeds in pursuance of Japan's unworthy ambition. The difference was only one of degree. I assume that Japan's greed was more unworthy. But the greater unworthiness conferred no right on the less unworthy of destroying without mercy men, women and children of Japan in a particular area.

The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs even as violence cannot be by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through non-violence. Hatred can be overcome only by love. Counter-hatred only increases the surface as well as the depth of hatred. I am aware that I am repeating what I have many times stated before and practised to the best of my ability and capacity. What I first stated was itself nothing new. It was as old as the hills. Only I recited no copy-book maxim but definitely announced what I believed in every fibre of my being. Sixty years of practice in various walks of life has only enriched the belief which experience of friends has fortified. It is however the central truth by which one can stand alone without flinching. I believe in what Max Muller said years ago, namely that truth needed to be repeated as long as there were men who disbelieved it.

Poona, 1-7-'46

*Harijan*, 7-7-1946

## A FAIR HIT

A correspondent writes :

"A report from New Delhi dated 16th April, published in *The Times of India* of the 18th says that at a prayer meeting held on Tuesday evening you said:

"1. 'The machinery and even engineers were all foreign. He had no enmity with machinery. Mills, he said, could not remove the poverty of India, but on the other hand had deprived crores of villagers of their work and practically ruined them. Those Indians responsible for ruining the villages had become foreigners and as such they should live in foreign countries.'

"How can you reconcile this statement with the gentlemen who form the Board of Trustees of the Kasturba Memorial Fund, the primary aim of which is to improve conditions in villages. The majority of these gentlemen are industrialists and owners of mills. Can they, who are responsible for ruining the villages, and still continue to ruin them by their mills, be ever capable of sincere help in improving the condition of villagers?

"2. You have so often talked and written against the curse of black markets. How many of the trustees of the Kasturba Memorial Fund can lay their hands on their hearts and say they have not dealt in the black market either as buyers or sellers?"

This is a fair hit. That mill-owners and such others have joined the Kasturba Trust is a compliment to my Ahimsa. Though I express my opinions strongly, there is no sting in them, nothing personal. I have no sense of shame in befriending mill-owners whose business, I hold, should be stopped, not forcibly but by reason. Education of the public could bring about results which no force can. I must say in favour of the capitalist class trustees that they never interfered with the decision of non-capitalist trustees. Indeed, they have always helped by their knowledge. The combination is good and beneficial to the Trust. Their sincerity cannot be questioned; for, they have faith in their capacity and the modern trend.

As to black markets, I do not know that any of the trustees have black market dealings. But should I discover

any, I should think twice before inviting them to leave the Trust. They have not imposed themselves on the Trust.

Delhi, 21-5-'46

*Harijan*, 26-5-1946

## 99

## LOUIS FISCHER'S INTERVIEW

**Socialist with a Difference**

That turned the discussion on to socialism. "You are a socialist and so are they," interpolated Fischer.

Gandhiji: "I am, they are not. I was a socialist before many of them were born. I carried conviction to a rabid socialist in Johannesburg, but that is neither here nor there. My claim will live when their socialism is dead."

"What do you mean by your socialism?"

"My socialism means 'even unto this last'. I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. In their socialism, probably these have no place. Their one aim is material progress. For instance, America aims at having a car for every citizen. I do not. I want freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body."

"Yes, but there are variations. My socialism in its modified form means that the State does not own everything. It does in Russia. There you certainly do not own your body even. You may be arrested at any time, though you may have committed no crime. They may send you wherever they like."

"Does not under your socialism, the State own your children and educate them in any way it likes?"

"All States do that. America does it."

"Then America is not very different from Russia."

"You really object to dictatorship?"

"But socialism is dictatorship or else arm-chair philosophy. I call myself a communist also."



"O, don't. It is terrible for you to call yourself a communist. I want what you want, what Jaiprakash and the socialists want: a free world. But the communists don't. They want a system which enslaves the body and the mind."

"Would you say that of Marx?"

"The communists have corrupted the Marxist teaching to suit their purpose."

"What about Lenin?"

"Lenin started it. Stalin has since completed it. When the communists come to you, they want to get into the Congress and control the Congress and use it for their own ends."

"So do the socialists. My communism is not very different from socialism. It is a harmonious blending of the two. Communism, as I have understood it, is a natural corollary of socialism."

"Yes, you are right. There was a time when the two could not be distinguished. But today socialists are very different from communists."

"You mean to say, you do not want communism of Stalin's type."

"But the Indian communists want communism of the Stalin type in India and want to use your name for that purpose."

"They won't succeed."

### **Ethics of Reciprocity**

"Your young men are too Indo-centric," he said.

"That is only partly true. I won't say we have become international," replied Gandhiji, "but we have taken up forlorn causes, e.g., the cause of the exploited nations, because we are ourselves the chief exploited nation."

"The growing anti-white feeling here is bad," proceeded Gandhiji's interviewer. "In Taj Mahal Hotel they have put up a notice 'South Africans not admitted'. I do not like it. Your non-violence should make you more generous."

"That won't be non-violence. Today the white man rules in India. So, if Taj Mahal has the gumption to put up that notice, it is a feather in its cap."

Fischer's liberalism felt hurt. "That is what any nationalist will say. You must say something better," he remarked.

"Then I will be a nationalist for once," replied Gandhiji with firmness. "They have no right to be here if they do not deal with Indians on terms of equality."

"No right — yes," rejoined Fischer. "But you must give them more than their right. You must invite them."

"Yes, when I am the Viceroy."

"You mean the President of the Indian Republic."

"No. I will be quite content to be the Viceroy, a constitutional Viceroy, for the time being," said Gandhiji. "The first thing I will do, will be to vacate the Viceregal Lodge and give it to the Harijans. I will then invite the South African White visitors to my hut and say to them: 'You have ground my people to powder. But we won't copy you. We will give more than you deserve. We won't lynch you as you do in South Africa,' and thus shame them into doing the right."

"There is so much anti-white feeling today," put in Fischer somewhat troubled in mind.

"Of course, I am opposed to that. It can do no good to anybody."

"The world is so divided. And there might be another war and that may be between the coloured and the white races."

"Europe seems to be heading for another war. It is not sufficiently exhausted."

"Europe is terribly exhausted. But with the atom bomb human beings don't matter so much. A few scientists are enough. The next war will be carried on by pressing a few buttons. That is why colour war is so dangerous."

"Anything is better than cowardice. It is violence double distilled." And to illustrate his remark Gandhiji narrated the story of a Negro clergyman with a Herculean frame in South Africa saying 'pardon me brother', when insulted by a white man, and sneaking into a coloured man's compartment. "That is not non-violence. It is a travesty of Jesus' teaching. It would have been more manly to retaliate."

"You are not afraid of what happens to you but what it may mean to others," replied Fischer, analysing the illustration adduced by Gandhiji. "It takes a great deal of irresponsibility to give vent to your feelings and slap the white man under the circumstances described by you. In India the situation is different. The white men are not so numerous here."

"You are mistaken," replied Gandhiji. "Why, one Englishman is killed and a whole village is razed to the ground as a reprisal. What vindictiveness!"

### **A Testament of Faith**

"You are strongly constitutionalist now. Is it for fear of the alternative—violence?" finally asked Fischer.

"No. If India is destined to go through a blood bath, it will do so. The thing I would fear is my own cowardice or dishonesty. I have neither. So I say, we must go in and work it out. If they are dishonest, they will be found out. The loss will not be ours but theirs."

"I think you are afraid of the spirit of violence. It is widespread. I wonder whether it has not captured the mood of the youth and you are aware of it, and you fear that mood."

"It has not captured the imagination of the country. I admit that it has captured the imagination of a section of the youth."

"It is a mood that has got to be combated."

"Yes. I am doing it in my own way. It is my implicit faith that it is a survival which will kill itself in time. It cannot live. It is so contrary to the spirit of India. But what is the use of talking? I believe in an inscrutable Providence which presides over our destinies—call it God or by any other name you like. All I contend is that it is not the fear of violence that makes me advise the country to go to the Constituent Assembly. It is repugnant in a non-violent attitude not to accept an honourable substitute for civil revolt."

Panchgani, 27-7-'46

*Harijan*, 4-8-1946

## JEWS AND PALESTINE

I do believe that the Jews have been cruelly wronged by the world. "Ghetto" is, so far as I am aware, the name given to Jewish locations in many parts of Europe. But for their heartless persecution, probably no question of return to Palestine would ever have arisen. The world should have been their home, if only for the sake of their distinguished contribution to it.

But, in my opinion, they have erred grievously in seeking to impose themselves on Palestine with the aid of America and Britain and now with the aid of naked terrorism. Their citizenship of the world should have and would have made them honoured guests of any country. Their thrift, their varied talent, their great industry should have made them welcome anywhere. It is a blot on the Christian world that they have been singled out, owing to a wrong reading of the New Testament, for prejudice against them. "If an individual Jew does a wrong, the whole Jewish world is to blame for it." If an individual Jew like Einstein makes a great discovery or another composes unsurpassable music, the merit goes to the authors and not to the community to which they belong.

No wonder that my sympathy goes out to the Jews in their unenviably sad plight. But one would have thought, adversity would teach them lessons of peace. Why should they depend upon American money or British arms for forcing themselves on an unwelcome land? Why should they resort to terrorism to make good their forcible landing in Palestine? If they were to adopt the matchless weapon of non-violence whose use their best prophets have taught and which Jesus the Jew who gladly wore the crown of thorns bequeathed to a groaning world, their case would be the world's, and I have no doubt that among the many things that the Jews have given to the world, this would be the best and the brightest. It is twice blessed. It will

make them happy and rich in the true sense of the word and it will be a soothing balm to the aching world.

Panchgani, 14-7-'46

*Harijan*, 21-7-1946

## 101

## CRIMINALS AND NON-VIOLENCE

*Q.* What would be the treatment meted out to criminals in Free India in the light of your non-violence?

*A.* In independent India of the non-violent type, there will be crime but no criminals. They will not be punished. Crime is a disease like any other malady and is a product of the prevalent social system. Therefore, all crime including murder will be treated as a disease. Whether such an India will ever come into being is another question.

New Delhi, 28-4-'46

*Harijan*, 5-5-1946

## 102

## THIEVING

*Q.* What is the employer to do when an employee of his is addicted to stealing and is not amenable to correction whether it is by way of entreaty or the cane?

*A.* It may well be that the others too are addicts though they may not be found out. Observation would show that we are all thieves, the difference being that most of us are tolerant towards ourselves and intolerant towards those that are found out and are not of the ordinary run. What is man, if he is not a thief, who openly charges as much as he can for the goods he sells? If the reply be that the buyer is a willing dupe, it begs the question. In reality the buyer is helpless rather than willing. The stealing referred to is one of the symptoms of a deep-seated disease of society. It is symptomatic of the eternal strife between the moneyed few and the many paupers. Therefore, my advice to the employer will be to remove all temptations in the way of the thief, to treat him as if he was his own brother and,



when he refuses to yield to any treatment, however humanitarian it may be, to ask him to go his way. Let the employer always ask himself whether he would treat his own brother in the same way at the given stage.

Panchgani, 14-7-'46

*Harijan*, 21-7-1946

## 103

## NATURE CURE FOR CRIMINALS

Speaking after the evening prayer at Uruli, Gandhiji said that in his opinion, nature cure was an essential ingredient in the building of Swaraj of his conception. The attaining of true Swaraj presupposed the triple purification of body, mind and soul.

He could have hardly imagined when he uttered those words, that within twenty-four hours an occasion would arise to put that precept into practice. On the very next day a villager was brought to him with injuries on his body, received at the hands of thieves who had taken away ornaments etc. from his house. There were three ways, Gandhiji told the villagers of Uruli, of dealing with the case. The first was the stereotyped orthodox way of reporting to the police. Very often it only provided the police a further opportunity for corruption and brought no relief to the victim. The second way, which was followed by the general run of the village people, was to passively acquiesce in it. This was reprehensible as it was rooted in cowardice. Crime would flourish, while cowardice remained. What was more, by such acquiescence we ourselves became party to the crime. The third way, which Gandhiji commended, was that of pure Satyagraha. It required that we should regard even thieves and criminals as our brothers and sisters, and crime as a disease of which the latter were the victims and needed to be cured. Instead of bearing ill-will towards a thief or a criminal and trying to get him punished they should try to get under his skin, understand the cause that had let him into crime and try to remedy it. They should, for instance, teach him a vocation and provide

him with the means to make an honest living and thereby transform his life. They should realize that a thief or a criminal was not a different being from themselves. Indeed, if they turned the searchlight inward and closely looked into their own souls, they would find that the difference between them was only one of degree. The rich, moneyed man who made his riches by exploitation or other questionable means, was no less guilty of robbery than the thief who picked a pocket or broke into a house and committed theft. Only the former took refuge behind the facade of respectability and escaped the penalty of law. Strictly speaking, remarked Gandhiji, all amassing or hoarding of wealth, above and beyond one's legitimate requirements was theft. There would be no occasion for thefts and therefore, no thieves, if there was a wise regulation of riches and absolute social justice prevailed. In the Swaraj of his conception, there would be no thieves and no criminals, or else it would be Swaraj only in name. The criminal was only an indication of the social malady and since nature cure, as he envisaged it, included the triple cure for body, mind and soul, they must not be satisfied with merely banishing physical illness from Uruli, their work must include the healing of the mind and soul too, so that there would be perfect social peace in their midst.

### **The Way of Satyagraha**

If they followed the nature cure way of dealing with the criminal, which, as he had already explained, was the way of Satyagraha, they could not sit still in the face of crime. Only a perfect being could afford to lose himself within himself and withdraw completely from the cares and responsibilities of the world. But who could claim that perfection? "On the high sea a sudden calm is always regarded by experienced pilots and mariners with concern. Absolute calm is not the law of the ocean. It is the same with the ocean of life. More often than not, it portends rough weather. A Satyagrahi would therefore neither retaliate nor would he submit to the criminal, but seek to cure him by curing himself. He will not try to ride two horses at a time, viz. to pretend to follow the law of Satyagraha,

while at the same time, seeking police aid. He must forswear the latter, in order to follow the former. If the criminal himself chooses to hand himself over to the police, it would be a different matter. You cannot expect to touch his heart and win his confidence, if at the same time you are prepared to go to the police and inform against him. That would be gross betrayal of trust. A reformer cannot afford to be an informer." And by way of illustration, he mentioned several instances of how he had refused to give information to the police, about persons who had been guilty of violence and came and confessed to him. No police officer could compel a Satyagrahi to give evidence against a person who had confessed to him. A Satyagrahi would never be guilty of a betrayal of trust. He wanted the people of Uruli to adopt the method of Satyagraha, for dealing with crime and criminals. They should contact the criminals in their homes, win their confidence and trust by loving and selfless service, wean them from evil and unclean habits and help to rehabilitate them by teaching them honest ways of living.

Badlapur, 5-8-'46

*Harijan*, 11-8-1946

## HONEST BUSINESS

*Q.* I am a young businessman of 21 years and have 11 dependents. I believe in truth and non-violence but find I cannot strictly follow it in business. What should I do? Abandoning the business means suffering for my relations.

*A.* This begs the question. It is difficult but not impossible to conduct strictly honest business. The fact is that the honester a business the more successful it is. Hence the proverb coined by businessmen "Honesty is the best policy". What the correspondent lacks is application and an accurate knowledge of honest business methods. What is true is that honesty is incompatible with the amassing of a large fortune. "Verily, verily, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter

into the Kingdom of God." Nor therefore should an honest businessman, however capable he may be, support idlers whether eleven or more or fewer. The eleven dependents cannot all be infants or incapables. Honesty makes no impossible demands upon the resources of a businessman. An honest man cannot have dishonest kinsmen. The questioner will find on introspection that there is nothing wrong with honest business but that there is something wrong with him. Let him find out what it is that is wrong with him.

Panchgani, 18-7-'46

*Harijan*, 28-7-1946

## 105

### COMPENSATION FOR MURDER

I have been asked whether the brother or other near relatives of the late Bhai Rajabali should demand compensation in money from Government for his murder. The deceased himself would not have counted such a death as loss. As a matter of fact, it is murders such as this which, if wholly unavenged, will ultimately put an end to murder. The moment any compensation or revenge is sought, the good of the willing sacrifice is wiped out. And how then could the spirit of the deceased rest in peace?

Murder can never be avenged by either murder or taking compensation. The only way to avenge murder is to offer oneself as a willing sacrifice, with no desire for retaliation. Those who believe in this premise will never dream of demanding or taking any compensation for the loss of their dear ones. The principle of taking of life for life will, on the contrary, only lead to an increase of murders. This is apparent to all today. Revenge or compensation may furnish some satisfaction to the individual, but I am quite definite that it can never restore peace to or uplift society.

The question arises as to what the individual should do in a society where revenge is the rule. The answer lies not in precept but in example. And those alone can set

the example who have been wronged. Therefore, the final decision must rest with Bhai Rajabali's relatives. My duty lay in pointing them the way of Ahimsa as I know it.

Sevagram, 9-8-'46

*Harijan*, 18-8-1946

## 106

## HEAL THYSELF

A correspondent has written to me about the butchery that is going on in Ahmedabad. I give below the relevant portions from his letter.

"I wish to write to you about the means to be employed for putting down riots. About two months ago you wrote an article on Ahimsak Seva Dal—non-violent volunteer corps. But looking at the situation in the country, the suggestion will not do. Just as you have taught us how to fight against the British Government non-violently, you should go to some place of riot and show us the way of quelling riots in a non-violent manner by personal example. Supposing you were in Ahmedabad today and went out to quell the riots, any number of volunteers will join you. Two of our Congress workers Shri Vasantrao and Shri Rajabali went out in such a quest and fell a prey to the goonda's knife. They laid down their lives in the pursuit of an ideal and they deserve all praise. But no one else had the courage to follow in their footsteps. They have not the same self-confidence. If they had it, there would be no riots and, even if riots broke out, they would never assume the proportion and the form that the present day riots do. But the fact remains that such a state is merely an imaginary thing today.

"Your guidance and example can inspire many like me with courage and self-confidence. Once you have shown the way, the local workers will be able to follow it whenever occasion demands it. I feel that unless you set an example in action, your writings and utterances will not be of any use to the ordinary people, and even Congressmen, in organizing non-violent protection of society."

I like the suggestion mentioned above. People followed my advice and took to non-violent resistance against the British Government, because they wanted to offer some



sort of resistance. But their non-violence, I must confess, was born of their helplessness. Therefore, it was the weapon of the weak. That is why, today we worship Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his Azad Hind Fauj (I.N.A.). We forget the Netaji himself had told his soldiers that on going to India, they must follow the way of non-violence. This I have from the leaders of the I.N.A. But we have lost all sense of discrimination. To restore it, the I.N.A. men will have to live up to the ideal placed before them by Netaji. The work of those who believe in non-violence is very difficult in this atmosphere which is full of violence. But the path of true non-violence requires much more courage than violence. We have not been able to give proof of such non-violence. We might look upon the action of Shri Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Shri Vasantrao and Shri Rajabali as examples of the non-violence of the brave. But when communal feelings run high, we are unable to demonstrate any effect of the sacrifices mentioned above. For that, many like Shri Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi will have to lay down their lives. The fact that no one else in Ahmedabad has followed the example set by Shri Vasantrao and Shri Rajabali shows that we have not yet developed the spirit of sacrifice to the extent of laying down our lives in non-violent action. The correspondent has rightly said that under these circumstances, I should act myself whether others join me or not. It will be disgraceful on my part to sit at home and tell others to go and lay down their lives. Such a thing cannot be an indication of non-violence. I have never had the chance to test my non-violence in the face of communal riots. It might be argued that it was my cowardice which prevented me from seeking such a chance. Be that as it may, God willing, the chance will still come to me, and by throwing me in the fire, He will purify me and make the path of non-violence clear. No one should take it to mean that sacrifice of my life will arrest all violence. Several lives like mine, will have to be given if the terrible violence that has spread all over, is to stop and non-violence reign supreme in its place. The poet has sung:

“हरिनो मारग छे शूरानो नहीं कायरनुं काम जोने ।”

"The path of Truth is for the brave, never for the coward." The path of Truth is the path of non-violence.

Panchgani, 26-6-'46

*Harijan*, 4-8-1946

107

## CONGRESS MINISTERS AND NON-VIOLENCE

Shri Shankarrao Dev writes:

"Many people do not understand why those who call themselves Satyagrahis, resort to the use of the military and the police, the moment they become ministers of Governments. The people feel that this is a breach of both the creed and the policy of Ahimsa. This popular belief seems to be consistent with reason. The inconsistency between belief and action of the Congress ministers and the exploitation of the same by their opponents, both Congress and non-Congress, makes it hard for our workers to stand up to the criticism.

"Generally speaking, Congress Ahimsa has been the Ahimsa of the weak. It was bound to be so in the present development of the country and this fact is well known to you. You claim that there is a special fire in the Ahimsa of the strong. At the same time you accepted leadership of the weak, in order to make them strong through the use of Ahimsa. And, in spite of their weakness, governmental power has today come into their hands. It is impossible for them today to put down disturbances without the use of the police and the military, and if they tried to do so, they would not only not succeed, but they would not get the co-operation of the people either.

"I did once ask you, whether a Satyagrahi should take high office if it came his way and if he did, how should he promote non-violence? I hold that the person who has made non-violence his creed, should not take office and he will never be happy there. But there can be no such difficulty for those who have accepted Ahimsa only as a policy. Many Congressmen have accepted office and you have permitted them to do so. The question arises as to whether you can expect those who believe in Ahimsa, to act up to it, at least in their personal capacity, during disturbances. Further, having acquired strength through non-violence, how should

it be used, in order to bring in a State, where there is need for the least government? If you cannot lighten our path towards the desired goal, Satyagraha will not be considered a full-fledged weapon."

From my point of view the answer is easy. I have been saying for some time, that the words "truth and non-violence" should be removed from the Congress constitution. But whether they are actually removed or not, let us assume that they are and then we shall be able to come to an independent judgment on the rightness or wrongness of any action. I am convinced that so long as we have to rely on the use of the military and even the police for preserving internal order, we shall continue to remain the slaves of either Britain or some other foreign power. It matters little then, whether the Government is in the hands of Congress or non-Congressmen. Let us assume that Congress ministers are not pledged to non-violence. Let us further assume that Hindus, Mussalmans and others want military and police protection. If they do, they will continue to receive it. Those ministers who are wedded to non-violence, must resign, since they would object to the use of the military and the police. The significance of it all is that so long as our people have not the wisdom to come to a mutual understanding, so long will *goondaism* continue and we shall not be able to generate the true strength of Ahimsa within us.

Now as to how this non-violent strength can be created. I gave the answer to this question in the *Harijan* of August 4th, in replying to a letter from Ahmedabad. So long as we have not cultivated the strength to die with courage and love in our hearts, we cannot hope to develop the Ahimsa of the strong.

There remains the question as to whether in an ideal society, there should be any or no government. I do not think, we need worry ourselves about this at the moment. If we continue to work for such a society, it will slowly come into being to an extent, such that the people can benefit by it. Euclid's line is one without breadth but no one has so far been able to draw it and never will. All the same it is only by keeping the ideal line in mind that

we have made progress in geometry. What is true here is true of every ideal.

It must be remembered that nowhere in the world, does a State without government exist. If at all it could ever come into being, it would be in India; for, ours is the only country where the attempt has, at any rate, been made. We have not yet been able to show that bravery to the degree which is necessary and for the attainment of which there is only one way. Those who have faith in the latter, have to demonstrate it. In order to do so, the fear of death has to be completely shed, just as we have shed the fear of prisons.

New Delhi, 6-9-'46

*Harijan*, 15-9-1946

## 108

### DO NOT ELIMINATE TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE

A correspondent who sends his name and describes himself as devoted to service writes:

"Recently in your reply to Shri Shankarrao Dev you have said: 'I have been saying for some time that the words "truth and non-violence" should be removed from the Congress constitution.'

"If this happens in the existing circumstances, people will lose their faith in Congress because they will feel that so long as it was not in power it was thought best to adhere to truth and non-violence, but now that power has come, it contemplates removing these words from the constitution. They might even infer that the removal is being resorted to in order to counter the Muslim League's threat of direct action.

"If these words are eliminated from the constitution, Congress will fall from the high pedestal which these means alone have secured for it. It will lose in prestige. You have always said that you yourself cannot go forward one step without truth and non-violence, and is it not their adherence to these that makes the public think of Congressmen as trustworthy, merciful, full of the spirit of service and bravery? The tree must perish if its



roots are destroyed. You must see to it that the roots go deeper and deeper and are not eradicated.

"Therefore, I feel that you should compel every Congressman to follow these principles and if he refuses, he must leave the Congress.

How can I, the champion of Ahimsa, compel anyone to perform even a good act? Has not a well-known Englishman said that to make mistakes as a free man is better than being in bondage in order to avoid them? I believe in the truth of this. The reason is obvious. The mind of a man who remains good under compulsion cannot improve, in fact it worsens. And when compulsion is removed all the defects well up to the surface with even greater force.

Moreover, no one should be a dictator. Even the Congress cannot force its members to follow truth and non-violence. These have to be accepted willingly from the heart.

I have been recommending the elimination of these words from the constitution for over a year, long before the Muslim League contemplated direct action which makes no bones about Himsa or Ahimsa. Thus my recommendation has no connection with the League's resolution. But I have no help for those who invariably attribute sinister motives to my words.

I have strong grounds for my recommendation. Congress may not cover untruth and violence under the guise of truth and non-violence. Is not this an all-sufficing reason? If Congressmen were no hypocrites, nothing could be better than that Congress should adhere to these two pillars.

I could never wish the Congress, the moment it comes into power, to discard the very ladder by which it has climbed so high. I believe that if Congressmen, while in power, renounce truth and non-violence, the lustre surrounding the Congress will grow dim.

We must all guard against one mistake. There is no rule against following what is not in the constitution. Indeed my hope is that when these words are removed, all or a large majority of Congressmen will heartily follow truth and non-violence even to the point of death.



The writer has forgotten to mention one thing which I should like to clarify. The words in the constitution are 'peaceful and legitimate'. I have no right to interpret them as truthful and non-violent, if they don't bear that meaning. Congress has adopted them as a policy, not as a creed. The question of my right to retain or eliminate them does not arise. But whilst it lasts, policy is tantamount to creed and hence becomes obligatory. Of course, my recommendation has no meaning if 'peaceful' can be interpreted as violent and 'legitimate' as untruthful.

New Delhi, 21-9-'46

*Harijan*, 29-9-1946

## EXCESSIVE PRAISE

Thus writes an army officer to a friend:

"...And what a pity it is that, in all democratic countries, politicians are so ignorant of and uninterested in the army. The army could teach them much. Is it not at least worthy of deep thought as to why it is, that the army has held the loyalty and affection of the man serving in it to a far greater degree than any other Government service? And held it moreover under conditions of danger and discomfort and trial far exceeding those of any other service. You have a fine army and it will be finer still when your best men come forth in large numbers to officer it. Find the right officers and you need have no fears about it. It will be second to none. But put in the wrong officers or get it mixed up with politics and you will have a heavy bill to pay. India is bound to have many troubled years ahead, but I am convinced that the one thing which can pull you through them most quickly and with the minimum bloodshed is your present army, provided you find officers for it and keep politics and religious differences out of it."

It is not a matter for pity if it is true that in all democratic countries politicians are uninterested in the army. The pity of it is that they are wrongly interested in it. The democracies regard army men as their saviours. They bring

wealth and subjugate other countries and sustain authority in times of civil disturbance. What is, therefore, to be wished is that democracy to be true, should cease to rely upon the army for anything whatsoever.

What has the army done for India? It is for that army that the writer pleads. I fear that in no sense has it served India's interests. It has kept millions of inoffensive and disarmed people under subjection. It has impoverished them. It is an army of which the sooner the British part is sent away and better employed, the better for both India and England, and the world. The sooner the Indian part is turned away from its destructive purpose and its talent employed for constructive purposes, the better it will be for democracy in India. It will be a poor democracy that depends for its existence on military assistance. Military force interferes with the free growth of the mind. It smother the soul of man. Thanks to years of foreign domination brought about by the "highly efficient" army, India, in spite of the efforts of the Mission, might have to pull through a long or short civil war which, I shall hope, will bring to an end all infatuation for armed forces. They are a brutalizing process after you have isolated discipline which should be common for any social order. If Free India has to sustain the present military expenditure, it will bring no relief to the famishing millions.

Mussoorie, 30-5-'46

*Harijan*, 9-6-1946

## WHY ARMIES?

Two Indonesian friends, who dropped in to see Gandhiji, asked how it was possible for them to resist European aggression except by aggression. Europe had always believed in force and the Indonesian friends did not see how any country could meet it except by force.

Gandhiji gently remonstrated by saying that such a question betrayed complete ignorance of non-violence. "Let me put you a counter-question," he said. "Supposing the armed and combined might of Britain, America and Russia wished to enslave you, what amount of violence would you need to counter it? I suggest that you would not violently stand up to it unless, perhaps, you had the backing of the whole of Asia and even then you might lose if the European weapons of war were better. But you would resist them alone with non-violence. You might be annihilated to a man but no one could conquer you." Gandhiji went on to tell them what he has been saying on more than one occasion recently that the Indian struggle for independence had been mere passive resistance which is a weapon of the weak and often a stepping stone to active armed resistance. If the Congress had really adopted non-violence, the present communal strife just could not have come into being. The bravery of the heart was far greater than the bravery of the body. A non-violent Indonesia could lead the East, a position Gandhiji would have liked India to hold. But today a mighty flood of violence was sweeping over India which they had not, to their hurt, learnt how to resist non-violently. "Unless," he ended, "we cultivate this strength India will not fulfil the high hopes I have cherished for her in my heart all these many years."

New Delhi, 10-7-'47

*Harijan*, 20-7-1947

## OUTSIDE HIS FIELD

Major-General Cariappa is reported to have said as follows:

"Non-violence is of no use under the present circumstances in India and only a strong army can make India one of the greatest nations in the world."

I fear, like many experts, General Cariappa has gone beyond his depth and has been unwittingly betrayed into a serious misconception of Ahimsa, of whose working in the nature of things, he can only have very superficial knowledge. By reason of lifelong practice of Ahimsa, I claim to be an expert in it, though very imperfect. Speaking in absolute terms, the more I practise it the clearer I see how far I am from the full expression of Ahimsa in my life. It is his ignorance of this, the greatest duty of man in the world, which makes him say that in this age non-violence has little scope in the face of violence, whereas I make bold to say that in this age of the atom bomb unadulterated non-violence is the only force that can confound all the tricks of violence put together. It would have become the General, unaided as he can only now be, by his British teachers of military science and practice, not to have gone out of his depth. Generals greater than General Cariappa have been wise and humble enough frankly to make the admission that they can have no right to speak of the possibilities of the force of Ahimsa. We are witnessing the tragic insolvency of military science and practice in its own home. Should a bankrupt, who has been by the gamble in the share market, sing the praise of that particular form of gambling?

New Delhi, 7-11-'47

*Harijan*, 16-11-1947

## WOMEN'S ORDEAL

"It is not death that matters but how you meet death," Gandhiji remarked on one occasion. To die at the hands of one's brother is a privilege, provided you die bravely. But what about women who were being abducted and forcibly converted? That no one could be 'converted' forcibly was here beside the point. "And why should Indian women feel so helpless? Is bravery the monopoly of men only? Women of course do not generally carry swords though the Rani of Jhansi did and outdid all her contemporaries in the valour of the sword. Still all cannot become Ranis of Jhansi. But all women can emulate the example of Sita whom even the mighty Ravana dared not touch. Ranis of Jhansi could be subdued."

"Let no one dismiss the example of Sita as legendary," he proceeded and gave the example of Olive Doke who dared to go and live among the unclad primitive Negro tribes in the heart of Africa without fear of molestation. It was that higher type of valour which he wanted Indian womanhood to cultivate. The military and police might protect them from abduction but what about those who had already been abducted or who might be abducted in spite of the police and the military? They ought to learn to die before a hair of their head could be injured. He averred that it was possible for a woman to put an end to herself by choking or biting the tongue.

**Death before Dishonour**

The next evening he had to revise the technique suggested above. Dr. Sushila who had heard him the day before had told him — Dr. B. C. Roy who saw him the next morning confirmed her statement — that one could not end one's life by choking or biting one's tongue. The only way known to medicine for instant self-immolation was a strong, poisonous dose. If this was so, he, the speaker, would advise every one running the risk of dishonour to take poison before submission to dishonour. He had, however, heard



from those given to *yogic* practices that it was possible by some *yogic* practice to end life. He would try to inquire. His was not an idle idea. He meant all he had said. The very fact of steeling oneself for death before dishonour braced one for the struggle. Woman in our country was brought up to think that she was well only with her husband or on the funeral pyre. He would far rather see India's women trained to wield arms, said the speaker, than that they should feel helpless. The vogue of carrying daggers and revolvers by women was on the increase. He knew, however, that arms were a poor weapon when it came to the matter of defending one's honour against odds. Arms were a symbol of one's helplessness, not strength. When one was deprived of them, generally there was nothing left but surrender.

New Delhi, 18-10-'46

*Harijan*, 27-10-1946

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#### A WOMAN'S DILEMMA

*Q.* What is a woman to do when attacked by miscreants? To run away, or resist with violence? To have boats in readiness to fly or prepare to defend with weapons?

*A.* My answer to this question is very simple. For me there can be no preparation for violence. All preparation must be for non-violence if courage of the highest type is to be developed. Violence can only be tolerated as being preferable always to cowardice. Therefore I would have no boats ready for a flight in emergency. For a non-violent person there is no emergency, but quiet dignified preparation for death. Hence whether it is a man or a woman, he or she will defy death even when he or she is unassisted; for real assistance is from God. I can preach no other thing and I am here to practise what I preach. Whether such an opportunity will occur to me or be given to me I do not know. If there are women who when assailed by miscreants cannot resist themselves without arms,

they do not need to be advised to carry arms. They will do so. There is something wrong in this constant enquiry as to whether to bear arms or not. People have to learn to be naturally independent. If they will remember the central teaching, namely, that the real effective resistance lies in non-violence, they will model their conduct accordingly. And that is what the world has been doing although unthinkingly. Since it is not the highest courage, namely, courage born of non-violence, it arms itself even unto the atom bomb. Those who do not see in it the futility of violence will naturally arm themselves to the best of their ability.

In India since my return from South Africa, there has been conscious and constant training in non-violence with the result we have seen.

*Q.* Can a woman be advised to take her own life rather than surrender?

*A.* This question requires a definite answer. I answered it in Delhi just before leaving for Noakhali. A woman would most certainly take her own life rather than surrender. In other words, surrender has no room in my plan of life. But I was asked in what way to take one's own life. I promptly said it was not for me to prescribe the means, and behind the approval of suicide under such circumstances was and is the belief that one whose mind is prepared for even suicide will have requisite courage for such mental resistance and such internal purity that her assailant will be disarmed. I could not carry the argument any further because it does not admit of further development. It requires positive proof which, I own, is lacking.

*Q.* If the choice is between taking one's own life or that of the assailant, which would you advise?

*A.* When it is a question of choice between killing oneself or the assailant, I have no doubt in my mind that the first should be the choice.

Palla, 27-1-'47

*Harijan*, 9-2-1947

## THE TRAVAIL

A friend was discussing with Gandhiji the other day the recent gruesome happenings in Calcutta. His sensitive and refined spirit shrank from the very idea of narrow communalism. What filled him with anguish was not the loss of life so much, deplorable as it was, as the degradation of the human spirit that had resulted from the Calcutta happenings. "Even those who never thought in terms of communalism are now becoming communal-minded. But that was not all. The madness has spread."

As Gandhiji sat listening to the stories that came from Bengal, his mind was made up. "If I leave Delhi," he remarked, "it will not be in order to return to Sevagram but only to go to Bengal. Else, I would stay here and stew in my own juice."

He consulted two friends from Bengal that evening about it. "Allow us to go there first and report," said they. "Give us a chance to do our bit and then, if necessary, you can come." Gandhiji agreed.

In the course of the talk, one of them asked Gandhiji whether he would recommend fasting to check the orgy of communal madness that was spreading in Bengal. Gandhiji's reply was in the negative. He narrated how a valuable colleague from Ahmedabad had invited him to immolate himself. "We believe in the non-violent way but lack the strength. Your example would steady our wavering faith and fortify us." The logic was perfect and the temptation great. "But I resisted it and said 'no'. There is no inner call. When it comes, nothing will keep me back. I have reasoned with myself too about it. But I need not set forth my reasons. Let people call me a coward if they please. I have faith that when the hour arrives God will give me the strength to face it and I won't be found unready."

### The Way of the Cross

"Fasting cannot be undertaken mechanically," he proceeded. "It is a powerful thing but a dangerous thing if

handled amateurishly. It requires complete self-purification, much more than what is required in facing death without retaliation even in mind. One such act of perfect sacrifice would suffice for the whole world. Such is held to be Jesus' example."

"The idea is," he continued, "that you appropriate to yourself and assimilate the essence of his sacrifice, symbolically represented by the bread and wine of the Eucharist. A man who was completely innocent offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act. "It is finished" were the last words of Jesus, and we have the testimony of his four disciples as to its authenticity.

"But whether the Jesus tradition is historically true or not I do not care. To me it is truer than history because I hold it to be possible and it enshrines an eternal law—the law of vicarious and innocent suffering taken in its true sense."

He then proceeded to show how the lesson of Jesus could be applied to the present situation. "A Hindu and a Mussalman braved the fury of the maddened crowd in Bombay and went down together literally clasped in a fatal embrace but refused to desert each other. Rajab Ali and Vasantrao Hegishte similarly fell to mob frenzy in the attempt to quell it. "What came out of it?" people might ask, "the fire still continues to rage." I do not think for a moment it has gone in vain. We may not see the effect today. Our non-violence is as yet a mixed affair. It limps. Nevertheless, it is there and it continues to work like a leaven in a silent and invisible way, least understood by most. It is the only way." As a further illustration of his remarks he recalled the history of the Champaran Satyagraha. There had been several bloody risings within half a century preceding it against the infamous compulsory indigo plantation. But each attempt had only resulted in fastening the rivets tighter than ever before. Then came the Champaran mass Satyagraha, untainted by acts of violence, and a century-old evil was overthrown in less than six months.

"Go forth, therefore," he concluded. "I have done. I won't detain you for a day longer. You have my blessings.

And I tell you there will be no tears but only joy, if tomorrow I get the news that all the three of you are killed."

"It will be pure joy to be so killed" they echoed.

"But mark my words," he resumed. "Let there be no foolhardiness about it. You should go because you feel you must and not because I ask you to."

"That goes without saying," they answered together as they took leave to go forth and face the flames.

### **In God's Hands**

Remarked Gandhiji at the evening prayer gathering that day that he had received numerous messages from Bengal inviting him to go there and still the raging fury. Whilst he did not believe that he had any such capacity, he was anxious to go to Bengal. Only he thought it was his duty to wait till Pandit Nehru's return and the meeting of the Working Committee. But he was in God's hands. If he clearly felt that he should wait for nothing, he would not hesitate to anticipate the date. His heart was in Bengal.

New Delhi, 18-10-'46

*Harijan*, 27-10-1946

### **THE CALL**

After much travail, deep thought and considerable argument, Gandhiji fixed the date of his departure for Bengal for the 28th of October. "I do not know what I shall be able to do there," he remarked in the course of an argument with a very esteemed friend, who made an eleventh hour effort to dissuade him from setting out on such a long journey just then. "All I know is that I won't be at peace with myself unless I go there." He then went on to describe the "power of thought". "There are two kinds of thought—idle and active. There may be myriads of the former swarming in one's brain. They do not count." He likened them to unfertilized ova in a spawn. "But one pure, active thought, proceeding from the depth and endowed with all the undivided intensity of one's being, becomes dynamic and works like a fertilized ovum." He was



averse to put a curb on the spontaneous urge which he felt within him to go to the people of Noakhali. Speaking before the evening prayer gathering on Sunday last at New Delhi, Gandhiji said that he was leaving for Calcutta the next morning. He did not know when God would bring him again to Delhi. He wanted to go to Noakhali from Calcutta. It was a difficult journey and he was in poor health. But one had to do one's duty and trust in God to make the way smooth. It was not that God necessarily and always removed hardships from one's path, but He did always enable one to bear them.

He did not want anyone to come to the station, he continued. India had given him enough affection. It needed no further demonstration.

He was not going to Bengal to pass judgment on anybody. He was going there as a servant of the people and he would meet Hindus and Muslims alike. Some Muslims looked upon him as an enemy today. They had not done so always. But he did not mind their anger. Were not his own religionists angry with him at times? From the age of seventeen he had learnt the lesson that all mankind, be they of any nationality, colour or country were his own kith and kin. If they were God's servants, they had to become servants of all His creation.

It was in that capacity that he was going to Bengal. He would tell them that Hindus and Muslims could never be enemies, one of the other. They were born and brought up in India and they had to live and die in India. Change of religion could not alter that fundamental fact. If some people liked to believe that change of religion changed one's nationality also, even they need not become enemies.

Sufferings of women had always melted his heart. He wanted to go to Bengal and wipe their tears and put heart into them, if he could. In Calcutta he would try to see the Governor and the Prime Minister Mr. Suhrawardy and then proceed to Noakhali.

To make peace between quarrelling parties, the speaker said, had been his vocation from his early youth. Even while he practised as a lawyer, he tried to bring the

contending parties together. Why could not the two communities be brought together? He was an optimist, he said.

From them he wanted only this help; that they should pray with him that this mutual slaughter might stop and the two communities might really become one at heart. Whether India was to become divided or remain one whole could not be decided by force. It had to be done through mutual understanding. Whether they decided to part or stay together, they must do so with goodwill and understanding.

He could never be party to anything which might mean humiliation or loss of self-respect for anyone. Therefore any peace to be substantial must be honourable, never at the cost of honour. In this he was only echoing the sentiment expressed to him by a prominent Muslim who had seen him. This friend had said: "We must reach our goal, whatever it might be—Pakistan or undivided India—without bloodshed or fighting. I go so far as to say that if it cannot be reached except through bloodshed and fighting amongst ourselves, it is not worth reaching."

### **The Grim Resolve**

"Why do you want to go to Noakhali? You did not go to Bombay, Ahmedabad or Chhapra, where things have happened that are infinitely worse than Noakhali. Would not your going there only add to the existing tension?" Was it because in these places it was the Muslims who had been the sufferers that he did not go there and would go to Noakhali because the sufferers there were Hindus?—he was asked by a Muslim friend the other day. Gandhi's reply was that he made no distinction between Hindu and Muslim. He would certainly have gone straight to any of the places mentioned by the friend, if anything approaching what had happened at Noakhali had happened there and if he felt that he could do nothing without being on the spot. It was the cry of outraged womanhood that had peremptorily called him to Noakhali. He felt he would find his bearings only on seeing things for himself at Noakhali. His technique of non-violence was on trial. It remained to be seen how it would answer in the face of the

present crisis. If it had no validity it were better that he himself should declare his insolvency. He was not going to leave Bengal until the last embers of the trouble were stamped out. "I may stay on here for a whole year or more. If necessary, I will die here. But I will not acquiesce in failure. If the only effect of my presence in the flesh is to make people look up to me in hope and expectation which I can do nothing to vindicate, it would be far better that my eyes were closed in death." He had mentally prepared himself, he added, for abstention from the Congress session, if necessary. He had similarly disengaged himself mentally from all his responsibilities in respect of Sevagram and Uruli—his latest love.

Sodepur, 1-11-'46

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946

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BAD NEWS FROM BIHAR

Fallen upon evil times as we are, we have to be thankful even for small mercies. Everybody heaved a sigh of relief when it was known that the *Bakr Id* had passed off quietly all over India. But the news from Bihar had set Gandhiji at war with himself. It was in Bihar that mass Satyagraha in India was born. It was in Bihar that his political career in India had practically commenced. And now it was the people of Bihar, for whom he had indefatigably laboured and who had showered upon him such love and affection—Bihar of Brijkishore Babu and Rajendra Babu—that had gone mad and besmirched the fair name of India. He had declared times without number that if the people of India should run amok against the English, they might find him dead. How could he be a witness to the same in regard to innocent Mussalmans who were after all our countrymen, our own kith and kin? "I went on spare, milkless diet, principally for reasons of health soon after coming to Calcutta. The happenings in the country induced me to prolong it. Now Bihar will send me to complete fast if things do not radically mend," he wrote in a letter to

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur on Sunday the 4th. "There will be no time limit," he added. "Do not agitate yourself but be really glad that I feel I have the strength to go through the ordeal and live up to my creed." On the following day in a letter to Pandit Jawaharlal he wrote : "The news from Bihar has shaken me. My own duty seems to me to be clear. A deep bond unites me with Bihar. How can I forget that? If even half of what one hears is true, it shows that Bihar has forgotten humanity. To blame it all on the goondas would be an untruth. Although I have striven hard to avert a fast, I can do so no longer.... My inner voice tells me, 'You may not live to be a witness to this senseless slaughter. If people refuse to see what is clear as daylight and pay no heed to what you say, does it not mean that your day is over?' The logic of the argument is driving me irresistibly towards a fast. I, therefore, propose to issue a statement\* that unless this orgy of madness ceases, I must go on a fast unto death. The fast may have to be delayed for some time. When you asked me at Delhi about it, I had replied that I was not thinking of it at the time. All that has now changed. You can strive with me, if you think differently. Whatever you say will carry weight with me. But knowing as you do my temperament, I am sure you will approve of my proposed step. In any event you will go on with your work without a moment's thought about my possible death and leave me in God's good care. No worry allowed." But neither Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru nor the Sardar to whom he had caused a copy of the letter to be sent tried to dissuade him. They understood better the magnitude of the stake. It was nothing less than India's independence.

Chaumuhani, 8-11-'46

*Harijan*, 17-11-1946

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\* The Statement follows immediately in the present volume under the caption 'To Bihar'.

## TO BIHAR

To Bihar,

Bihar of my dreams seems to have falsified them. I am not relying upon reports that might be prejudiced or exaggerated. The continued presence of the Central Chief Minister and his colleague furnishes an eloquent tale of the tragedy of Bihar. It is easy enough to retort that things under the Muslim League Government in Bengal were no better, if not worse, and that Bihar is merely a result of the latter. A bad act of one party is no justification for a similar act by the opposing party, more especially when it is rightly proud of its longest and largest political record. I must confess, too, that although I have been in Calcutta for over a week, I do not yet know the magnitude of the Bengal tragedy. Though Bihar calls me, I must not interrupt my programme for Noakhali. And is counter-communalism any answer to the communalism of which Congressmen have accused the Muslim League? Is it nationalism to seek barbarously to crush the fourteen per cent of the Muslims in Bihar?

I do not need to be told that I must not condemn the whole of Bihar for the sake of the sins of a few thousand Biharis. Does not Bihar take credit for one Brijkishore Prasad or one Rajendra Prasad? I am afraid, if the misconduct in Bihar continues, all the Hindus of India will be condemned by the world. That is its way, and it is not a bad way either. The misdeeds of Bihari Hindus may justify Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah's taunt that the Congress is a Hindu organization in spite of its boast that it has in its ranks a few Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and others. Bihari Hindus are in honour bound to regard the minority Muslims as their brethren requiring protection, equal with the vast majority of Hindus. Let not Bihar, which has done so much to raise the prestige of the Congress, be the first to dig its grave.



I am in no way ashamed of my Ahimsa. I have come to Bengal to see how far in the nick of time my Ahimsa is able to express itself in me. But I do not want in this letter to talk of Ahimsa to you. I do want, however, to tell you that what you are reported to have done will never count as an act of bravery. For thousands to do to death a few hundreds is no bravery. It is worse than cowardice. It is unworthy of nationalism, of any religion. If you had given a blow against a blow, no one would have dared to point a finger against you. What you have done is to degrade yourselves and drag down India.

You should say to Pandit Jawaharlalji, Nishtar Saheb and Dr. Rajendra Prasad to take away their military and themselves and attend to the affairs of India. This they can only do, if you repent of your inhumanity and assure them that Muslims are as much your care as your own brothers and sisters.

You should not rest till every Muslim refugee has come back to his home which you should undertake to rebuild, and ask your Ministers to help you to do so. You do not know what critics have said to me about your Ministers.

I regard myself as a part of you. Your affection has compelled that loyalty in me. And since I claim to have better appreciation than you seem to have shown of what Bihari Hindus should do, I cannot rest till I have done some measure of penance. Predominantly for reasons of health, I had put myself on the lowest diet possible soon after my reaching Calcutta. That diet now continues as a penance after the knowledge of the Bihar tragedy. The low diet will become a fast unto death, if the erring Biharis have not turned over a new leaf.

There is no danger of Bihar mistaking my act for anything other than pure penance as a matter of sacred duty.

No friend should run to me for assistance or to show sympathy. I am surrounded by loving friends. It would be wholly wrong and irrelevant for any other person to copy me. No sympathetic fast or semi-fast is called for. Such action can only do harm. What my penance should do is to quicken the conscience of those who know me and

believe in my *bona fides*. Let no one be anxious for me. I am like all of us in God's keeping.

Nothing will happen to me so long as He wants service through the present tabernacle.

Your Servant,  
M. K. GANDHI

Sodepur, 6-11-'46

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946

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## A CHALLENGE TO FAITH

Q. What should one do in his day-to-day life—that is, what is the minimum programme—so that one can acquire non-violence of the brave?

A. The minimum that is required of a person wishing to cultivate the Ahimsa of the brave is first to clear one's thought of cowardice and in the light of the clearance regulate his conduct in every activity, great or small. Thus the votary must refuse to be cowed down by his superior, without being angry. He must, however, be ready to sacrifice his post, however remunerative it may be. Whilst sacrificing his all, if the votary has no sense of irritation against his employer, he has Ahimsa of the brave in him. Assume that a fellow passenger threatens my son with assault and I reason with the would-be-assailant who then turns upon me. If then I take his blow with grace and dignity, without harbouring any ill-will against him, I exhibit the Ahimsa of the brave. Such instances are of every day occurrence and can be easily multiplied. If I succeed in curbing my temper every time and though able to give blow for blow I refrain, I shall develop the Ahimsa of the brave which will never fail me and which will compel recognition from the most confirmed adversaries.

*Harijan*, 17-11-1946

## A VENTURE IN FAITH

Early in the morning on Wednesday last Gandhiji announced to his party an important decision. He had decided to disperse his party detailing each member, including the ladies, to settle down in one affected village and make himself or herself hostage of the safety and security of the Hindu minority of that village. They must be pledged to protect with their lives, if necessary, the Hindu population of that village.

He was going to bury himself in East Bengal until such time that the Hindus and Mussalmans learnt to live together in harmony and peace. He would deprive himself of the services of all his companions and fend for himself with whatever assistance he could command locally.

That evening he explained his idea further to the party. A discussion followed in which Shri Thakkar Bapa and Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani also took part. His Ahimsa would be incomplete, he argued, unless he took that step. Either Ahimsa is the law of life or it is not. A friend used to say that the Ahimsa Sutra in Patanjali, *Ahimsa pratishthayam tatsannidhau vairatyagah* (अहिंसा प्रतिष्ठायां तत्सन्निधौ वैरत्यागः) was a mistake and needed to be amended and the saying *Ahimsa paramo dharmah* (अहिंसा परमो धर्मः) ought to be read as *Himsa paramo dharmah* (हिंसा परमो धर्मः); in other words, violence, not non-violence was the supreme law. If at the crucial moment he lost faith in the law of non-violence, he must accept the deceased friend's amendment which appeared to him to be absurd.

"I know the women of Bengal better than probably the Bengalis do. Today they feel crushed and helpless. The sacrifice of myself and my companions would at least teach them the art of dying with self-respect. It might open too the eyes of the oppressors and melt their hearts. I do not say that the moment my eyes are closed theirs will open. But that will be the ultimate result, I have not the slightest doubt. If Ahimsa disappears, Hindu Dharma disappears."

"The issue is not religious but political. It is not a movement against the Hindus, but against the Congress," remarked one member of the party.

"Do you not see that they think that the Congress is a purely Hindu body? And do not forget that I have no water-tight compartments such as religious, political and others. Let us not lose ourselves in a forest of words. How to solve the tangle—violently or non-violently—is the question. In other words, has my method efficacy today?"

Another member asked whether it was right to invite people to return to their villages under the prevailing conditions which involved a considerable amount of risk. Gandhiji's reply was that there was no harm in asking them to return to their villages if the Muslims of that village collectively guaranteed their safety and their guarantee was backed by one good Hindu and one good Mussalman, who would stay with them in that village and protect them by laying down their lives, if necessary. If there was that much guarantee, the refugees ought to return to their homes and face whatever risk there might be. If they had not the courage to live on these terms, Hinduism was doomed to disappear from East Bengal. The question of East Bengal is not one of Bengal alone. The battle for India is today being decided in East Bengal. Today Mussalmans are being taught by some that Hindu religion is an abomination and therefore forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam a merit. It would save to Islam at least the descendants of those who were forcibly converted. If retaliation is to rule the day, the Hindus, in order to win, will have to outstrip the Mussalmans in the nefarious deeds that the latter are reported to have done. The United Nations set out to fight Hitler with his weapons and ended by out-Hitlering Hitler.

"How can we reassure the people when the miscreants are still at large in these villages?" was the last question asked of him.

"That is why," replied Gandhiji, "I have insisted upon one good Mussalman standing security along with a good Hindu for the safety and security of those who might be

returning. The former will have to be provided by the Muslim Leaguers who form the Bengal Government."

In a letter to a friend he wrote from Dattapara: "The work I am engaged in here may be my last act. If I return from here alive and unscathed, it will be like a new birth to me. My Ahimsa is being tried here through and through as it was never before."

Khajirkhil, 16-11-'46

*Harijan*, 24-11-1946

## 120

### THE PURPOSE OF THE TOUR

[The following address which was written out by Gandhiji in Hindustani for being read to the audience at prayer time on 6th January—it being his day of silence—has been rendered in English from its Bengali version by Shri Nirmal Kumar Bose. It was published in the Bengali edition of the *Harijan* of the 12th instant.

—Mg. Ed.]

As my weekly silence will not break before 7 p.m., I have written out my address. I pray to God, and request you all to join with me in praying that the tour which I commenced yesterday should go on uninterrupted till the end and be successful in achieving its purpose. But before praying, you should know that purpose. I have only one object in view and it is a clear one: namely, that God should purify the hearts of Hindus and Muslims, and the two communities should be free from suspicion and fear towards each other. Please join with me in this prayer and say that God is the Lord of us both and that He may give us success.

You might well ask me why it is necessary to undertake a tour for this purpose; or how can one, who is not pure in heart himself, ask others to become pure; or how can one, who himself is subject to fear, give courage to others; one, who himself moves under armed escort, call upon others to cast away their arms. All these questions are relevant and have been put to me.

My answer is that during my tour I wish to assure the villagers to the best of my capacity that I do not bear



the least ill-will towards any. I can prove this only by living and moving among those who distrust me. I admit that the third question is a little difficult for me to answer; for I do happen to be moving under armed protection, I am surrounded by armed police and military keenly alert to guard me from all danger. I am helpless in the matter as it is arranged by the Government which being responsible to the people feels that it is their duty to keep me guarded by the police and the military. How can I prevent them from doing so? Under the circumstances, I can declare only in words that I own no protector but God. I do not know whether you will believe my statement. God alone knows the mind of a person; and the duty of a man of God is to act as he is directed by his inner voice. I claim that I act accordingly.

*Harijan*, 26-1-1947

## 121

### THE MODERN BUDDHA?

A question was put to Gandhiji at Narayanpur on the 15th January: Why cannot the apostle of non-violence, the modern Buddha, stop internecine war and blood-bath in the country?

Gandhiji, replying to this question, acquitted himself from the charge of being the modern Buddha. He was and claimed to be a simple man having extensive experience at his back, but on that account claimed to be no better than any member of the audience. He was an equal servant of both the communities or all the communities of India. He wished he had the power to stop 'internecine war' and consequent 'blood-bath'. Buddha or the prophets that followed him had gone the way they went in order to stop wars. The fact that he could not do so was proof positive that he had no superior power at his back. It was true that he swore by non-violence and so he had come to Noakhali in order to test the power of his non-violence. As he had repeatedly said ever since his arrival in Bengal,

he had no desire to leave Bengal unless both the communities showed by their action that they were like blood-brothers living together in perfect peace and amity.

Gandhiji also dealt with a question that was raised by the Muslim friends who had seen him before the prayer meeting. They had asked him how he expected friendly relations between the two communities when the Hindus agitated for the arrest and trial of those who were guilty of murders, arson and loot during the disturbances. The speaker confessed that he did not like these complaints. But he sympathized with the complainants so long as the wrong-doers avoided arrest and trial and so long as Muslim opinion in Noakhali did not insist upon guilty parties disclosing themselves. He would be glad to see Muslim opinion working actively to bring the offenders not before the courts of justice but before the court of public opinion. Let the offenders show contrition and let them return the looted property. Let them also show to those against whom offences were committed that they need fear no molestation, that the days of frenzy were over. Muslim public opinion should be such as to guarantee that miscreants would not dare to offend against any individual, and only then Hindus could be asked to return safely to their villages. The speaker was sure that such purging before the court of public opinion was infinitely superior to a trial before a court of law. What was wanted was not vengeance but reformation.

*Harijan*, 9-2-1947

## ON TRUSTEESHIP

Gandhiji answered some questions addressed to him and arising out of his remarks on trusteeship.

Q. Is it possible to defend by means of non-violence anything which can only be gained through violence?

A. What was gained by violence could not only not be defended by non-violence but the latter required the abandonment of ill-gotten gains.

Q. Is the accumulation of capital possible except through violence whether open or tacit?

A. Such accumulation by private persons was impossible except through violent means, but accumulation by the State in a non-violent society was not only possible, it was desirable and inevitable.

Q. Whether a man accumulates material or moral wealth he does so only through the help or co-operation of other members of society. Has he then the moral right to use any of it mainly for personal advantage?

A. No, he has no moral right.

Q. How would the successor of a trustee be determined? Will he only have the right of proposing a name, the right of finalization being vested in the State?

A. Choice should be given to the original owner who became the first trustee, but the choice must be finalized by the State. Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as the individual.

Q. When the replacement of private by public property thus takes place through the operation of the theory of trusteeship, will the ownership vest in the State, which is an instrument of violence, or in associations of a voluntary character like village communes and municipalities, which may of course derive their final authority from State-made laws?

A. That question involved some confusion of thought. Legal ownership in the transformed condition vested in the trustee, not in the State. It was to avoid confiscation

that the doctrine of trusteeship came into play retaining for the society the ability of the original owner in his own right. Nor is it true that the State must always be based on violence. It might be so in theory but the practice of the theory demanded a State which would for the most part be based on non-violence.

Satgharia (Noakhali), 2-2-'47

*Harijan*, 16-2-1947

## 123

### WITH A LANDHOLDER

"Where shall we stand when India is independent?" asked a friend representing the landholders' interests, the other day during his visit to Gandhiji.

"You will be as free as any scavenger," replied Gandhiji, "but whether you will be able to retain all the privileges which you are enjoying under the British Government is a question you can answer for yourself."

"The landholders," resumed the friend, "derived their charter of rights and privileges from the Permanent Settlement of 1802, which was of the nature of a contract between the British and the Zamindars, but they are quite willing to negotiate an agreement with the leaders of the country on the future of their rights."

"Being a non-violent man by nature," replied Gandhiji, "I cannot countenance the usurpation of anybody's just rights. But some of the extraordinary privileges that pass muster under British rule are themselves in the nature of an usurpation. The history of British rule is a history of usurpation. Those who helped the British Government in this process got certain rights as a reward for their services. These cannot be insisted upon."

"Many ancient Zamindaris existed long before the advent of the British and were exercising sovereign power," rejoined the friend, "as a product of the indigenous social and economic system of long standing. Don't you think they have a title to continue their existence? They are trying

their best to discharge a philanthropic function in the shape of founding educational and social institutions."

"Anything that is ancient and consistent with moral values has a title to be retained," answered Gandhiji. "*Per contra* anything that does not conform to moral values has to go. Wrong has no prescriptive right to exist merely because it is of a long standing. If those who are on your Zamindaris feel one with you and you with them, like members of a family, you have nothing to fear from anybody."

New Delhi, 23-4-'46

*Harijan*, 28-4-1946

124

## REDUCTION OF LANDLORD'S SHARE

Q. There is a movement for reducing the share of the owner from half to one-third of the agricultural produce. What is your opinion about this?

Gandhiji welcomed the move for the reduction of the landlord's share from half to one-third. He thought the move was substantial. The land belonged to the Lord of us all and therefore to the worker on it. But till that ideal state of things came about, the movement towards the reduction of the landlord's portion was in the right direction.

But he warned the movers against the use of compulsion or violence. He could have no part or share in violence. It was a reform to be brought about only by the cultivation of healthy public opinion. The reformers must have patience. He believed implicitly in the aphorism: 'As the end so the means.' In his opinion it was pernicious to hold that so long as the end was good, any means, however violent or unjust, were justified. Many movements had come to grief by reliance on doubtful means.

*Harijan*, 23-2-1947



## INTELLECTUAL AND MANUAL WORK

*Q.* Why should we insist on a Rabindranath or Raman earning his bread by manual labour? Is it not sheer wastage? Why should not brain workers be considered on a par with manual workers, for both of them perform useful social work?

*A.* Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist on is the necessity of physical labour. No man, I claim, ought to be free from that obligation. It will serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output. I venture to say that in ancient times Brahmans worked with their body as with their mind. But even if they did not, body labour was a proved necessity at the present time. In this connection I would refer to the life of Tolstoy and how he made famous the theory of bread labour first propounded in his country by the Russian peasant Bondaref.

Dharmapur (Noakhali), 6-2-'47

*Harijan*, 23-2-1947

## SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

*Q.* It has been our experience that a worker becomes power-loving after some time. How are the rest of his co-workers to keep him in check? In other words, how are we to preserve the democratic character of the organization? We have found that non-co-operation with the party in question does not help. The work of the organization itself suffers.

*A.* This is not your experience alone but it is almost universal. Love of power is usual in man and it often only dies with his death. Therefore, it is difficult for co-workers to keep him in check, if only because they are more likely than not to have the same human frailty; and so long as we do not know a single completely non-violent organization in the world, we cannot claim to know the utterly

democratic character of an organization because, as can be definitely proved, no perfect democracy is possible without perfect non-violence at the back of it. The question would be proper if non-co-operation was violent as it often, if not invariably, is. Claiming to know somewhat from experience the non-violent character of non-co-operation, I suggest that given a good cause, non-violent non-co-operation must succeed, and no organization can suffer through offering non-violent non-co-operation. The questioner labours under the difficulty of having experience of non-co-operation, at best partially non-violent, at its worst bare-face violence sailing under the name of non-violence. The pages of the *Harijan* and *Young India* are filled with instances of abortive non-co-operation, because of these two vital defects, non-violence being partial or totally absent. During my long experience, I also noticed that those who complain of others being ambitious of holding power are no less ambitious themselves, and when it is a question of distinguishing between half a dozen and six, it becomes a thankless task.

Q. In almost all villages there are parties and factions. When we draft local help, whether we wish it or not, we become involved in local power politics. How can we steer clear of this difficulty? Should we try to by-pass both parties and carry on work with the help of outside workers? Our experience has been that such work becomes entirely contingent upon outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn. What should we do then to develop local initiative and foster local co-operation?

A. Alas for India that parties and factions are to be found in the villages as they are to be found in our cities. And when power politics enter our villages with less thought of the welfare of the villages and more of using them for increasing the parties' own power, this becomes a hindrance to the progress of the villagers rather than a help. I would say that whatever be the consequence, we must make use as much as possible of local help and if we are free from the taint of power politics, we are not likely to go wrong. Let us remember that the English-educated men and women from the cities have criminally neglected

the villages of India which are the backbone of the country. The process of remembering our neglect will induce patience. I have never gone to a single village which is devoid of an honest worker. We fail to find him when we are not humble enough to recognize any merit in our villages. Of course, we are to steer clear of local politics, and this we shall learn to do when we accept help from all parties and no parties, wherever it is really good. I would regard it as fatal for success to by-pass villagers. As I knew this very difficulty, I have tried rigidly to observe the rule of one village, one worker, except that where he or she does not know Bengali, an interpreter's help has been given. I can only say that this system has so far answered the purpose. I must, therefore, discount your experience, I would further suggest that we have got into the vicious habit of coming to hasty conclusions. Before pronouncing such a sweeping condemnation as is implied in the sentence that 'work becomes entirely contingent upon outside aid and crumbles down as soon as the latter is withdrawn', I would go so far as to say that even a few years' experience of residence in a single village, trying to work through local workers, should not be regarded as conclusive proof that work could not be done through and by local workers. The contrary is obviously true. It now becomes unnecessary for me to examine the last sentence in detail. I can categorically say to the principal worker: 'If you have any outside help, get rid of it. Work singly, courageously, intelligently with all the local help you can get and, if you do not succeed, blame only yourself and no one else and nothing else.'

*Harijan, 2-3-1947*

## IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Q. We agree that intrinsically a movement for reducing the share of the owner from half to a third of the crop is justified. But could not the present *Tebhaga* Movement in Bengal be postponed until such time as when the affected persons can be smoothly absorbed in other occupations according to some long-term plan sponsored by the State?

We know you have said that the only way to effect such a radical transformation in society is through non-violence. But interested parties will sleep over that portion of your advice and parade your moral support to their demand and carry on the Movement in their own violent way. Hence is it not wrong for you to lend support to the Movement under the present circumstances when there is every chance of the entire middle class of Bengal being completely ruined as a result? The common villager will also suffer no less because he will also be deprived of the services now being rendered to the village economy by them.

A. In reply, Gandhiji uttered the warning that he only dealt with principles as he knew them. He had not studied the local question. Therefore, the questioner ran the risk of his ignorance causing injustice.

He felt that the question betrayed exaggeration on the part of the questioner. There was no ruin impending for the landlord. His land was not being confiscated. His portion, which he could take even if he was in Timbuctoo, was merely to be reduced from 50% to 33%. He could see no ruin in the proposal. He was afraid they were too much obsessed by the communal question. They should rise above it and examine every problem strictly on merits. Then they would never go wrong. Therefore they should accept the moral principle underlying the demand for reduction of the owner's share and work for solid amendments in which they were likely to succeed. Let them not

face confiscation rather than moderate reduction. Let them remember that for years past India had lived through confiscation. Industry after industry had been ruined and both the artisans as well as the farmers of India had been progressively reduced to poverty.

If the desired change were brought about through non-violent means, the world would not be deprived of the talents of the classes, but then the latter would not exercise them at the expenses of the labourers. In the non-violent order of the future, the land would belong to the State, for had it not been said '*sabhi bhumi Gopalaki*' (सभी भूमि गोपालकी)? Under such dispensation, there would be no waste of talents and labour. This would be impossible through violent means. It was therefore a truism to say that the utter ruin of the land-owners brought about through violence would also involve the ruin of the labourers in the end. If the land-owners, therefore, acted wisely, no party would lose.

Q. Some women workers who earn part of their living by weaving mats were advised by you the other day to work on co-operative principles. Bengal's agriculture has been reduced to an uneconomic proposition through extreme fragmentation of holdings. Would you advise farmers also to adopt co-operative methods?

If so, how are they to effect this under the present system of land-ownership? Should the State make the necessary changes in the law? If the State is not ready, but the people so desire, how are they to work through their own organizations to this end?

A. Replying to the first part of the question, Gandhiji said that he had no doubt that the system of co-operation was far more necessary for the agriculturists than for the mat weavers. The land as he maintained belonged to the State; therefore, it yielded the largest return when it was worked co-operatively.

Let it be remembered that co-operation should be based on strict non-violence. There was no such thing as success of violent co-operation. Hitler was a forcible example of the latter. He also talked vainly of co-operation



which was forced upon the people and everyone knew where German had been led as a result.

Gandhiji concluded by saying that it would be a sad thing if India also tried to build up the new society based on co-operation by means of violence. Good brought about through force destroyed individuality. Only when the change was effected through the persuasive power of non-violent non-co-operation, i.e. love, could the foundation of individuality be preserved and real, abiding progress be assured for the world.

*Harijan, 9-3-1947*

128

### QUESTION BOX

*Q.* Do you support evacuation of the Hindus from the affected areas if the League Government or the majority community agrees to give us due compensation?

*A.* He had supported the proposition from the non-violent standpoint. It was applicable to all provinces whether the majority was Hindu or Muslim. What could the Government do if the majority had become so hostile that they would not tolerate the presence of the minority community? In his opinion it would be improper for them to force the majority into submission, nor could they undertake to protect the minority at the point of the bayonet. Suppose for instance that the majority would not tolerate Ramadhun or the clapping (to keep time with the chanting), would not listen to the fact that Rama was not a person but the name was synonymous with God, and that the Hindus believed in clapping, and that the Muslims would not tolerate it, he had then no hesitation in saying that the minority should evacuate if adequate compensation was paid.

*Q.* What should a Hindu worker do when he is being deliberately misrepresented by interested parties in Noakhali?

*A.* The answer in terms of Ahimsa, generally, would be that acts should be allowed to speak for themselves.

Whilst this was good as a general proposition there were occasions when to speak and explain was a duty and not to speak would amount to a falsehood. Therefore wisdom dictated that there were some occasions when speech must accompany action. Of course there was an occasion when mere thought would take the place of speech and action. Such was the attribute of the Almighty and might be almost possible for one in a billion, but he knew no such instance.

*Q.* You have advised evacuation if the majority become irrevocably hostile. But you have also maintained that a truly non-violent man should never give up hope of converting his opponent by love. Under these circumstances, how can non-violent man accept defeat and evacuate?

*A.* As to this question, it was perfectly correct that a non-violent man would not move out of his place. For such a one there would be no question of compensation. He would simply die at his post and prove that his presence was not a danger to the State or the community. He knew that the Hindus of Noakhali made no such pretension. They were simple folk who loved the world and wanted to live in the world in peace and safety. Such persons would consult their honour if the Government honourably offered them compensation in order to see the majority living in peace. If the mere presence of the Hindus irritated the Muslims who were the majority, he would consider it to be the duty of the Government to offer compensation as it would be of the Government in a Hindu majority province to offer compensation to the Muslims if their presence irritated the majority community.

*Q.* In case of evacuation, under advice from the Government, should the evacuees ask for compensation for:

- (a) all their movable and immovable property,
- (b) loss of business?

In other words, what would you consider to be adequate compensation?

*A.* Gandhiji said that the Government would be obliged to compensate for both immovables and movables when the latter could not or were not carried away with

him by the evacuee. Loss of business was a ticklish question. He could not conceive the possibility of any Government shouldering the burden of such compensation. He would understand the proposition that asked for a reasonable sum for enabling the person concerned to start business in a new place.

Whilst he examined and admitted the possibility of evacuation, his experience of all India told him that the Hindus and the Muslims knew how to live at peace among themselves. He declined to believe that people had said goodbye to their senses so as to make it impossible to live at peace with each other as they had done for generations.

For, he believed with the late Poet Iqbal that the Hindus and the Muslims who had lived together long under the shadow of the mighty Himalayas and had drunk the waters of the Ganga and the Jamuna had a unique message for the world.

*Harijan*, 16-3-1947

## MILITARY TRAINING

The thing that pained me was the reference to military education.\* I think that we have to wait a long time

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\* The recommendation referred to here is given below

### CENTRAL ADVISORY BOARD'S RECOMMENDATIONS

NEW DELHI, Jan. 27th

"The Central Advisory Board of Education has endorsed the view of the Working Committee of the National War Academy that residential schools, where boys may obtain adequate facilities for developing the character and powers of leadership, should be started by Provinces and States to act as 'feeders' for the National War Academy.

"The Board is of opinion that the new type of schools contemplated in the Scheme of National Post-war Education will provide the necessary training for the leadership, character, intelligence, courage and physical fitness required by the military authorities for the Army, Navy and Air Force.

before a nation-wide decision on the point is made. Otherwise, we are likely to become a curse rather than a blessing to the world. Leaders are not made, they are born. Should the State be in a hurry over this matter even before full independence is established? Therefore, I am surprised that the Central Advisory Board should be party to such a sweeping recommendation as they have made.

Kazirkhil, 21-2-'47

*Harijan*, 23-3-1947

### 130

### NON-RESISTANCE

Gandhiji in his post-prayer speech referred to a letter from a correspondent which had lately reached him. It was in answer to that letter that he wanted to say that if a man abused him, it would never do for him to return the abuse. An evil returned by another evil only succeeded in multiplying it, instead of leading to its reduction. It was a universal law, he said, that violence could never be quenched by superior violence but could only be quenched by non-violence. But the true meaning of non-resistance had often been misunderstood or even distorted. It never implied that a non-violent man should bend before the violence of an aggressor. While not returning the latter's violence by violence, he should refuse to submit to the latter's illegitimate demand even to the point of death. That was the true meaning of non-resistance.

If, for instance, proceeded the speaker, someone asked him under threat of violence to admit a claim, say, like that of Pakistan, he should not immediately rush to return the violence thus offered. In all humility he would ask the aggressor what was really meant by the demand, and if he was really satisfied that it was something worth striving

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"It directs the attention of provincial authorities to the necessity of developing their schools on these lines which will actually serve as the kind of schools which the military authorities have in mind."

—A. P. I.

*Harijan*, 23-3-1947

for, then he would have no hesitation in proclaiming from the housetop that the demand was just and it had to be admitted by everyone concerned. But if the demand was backed by force, then the only course open to the non-violent man was to offer non-resistance against it as long as he was not convinced of its justice. He was not to return violence but neutralize it by withholding one's hand and, at the same time, refusing to submit to the demand. This was the only civilized way of going on in the world. Any other course could only lead to a race for armaments interspersed by periods of peace which was by necessity and brought about by exhaustion, when preparations would be going on for violence of a superior order. Peace through superior violence inevitably led to the atom bomb and all that it stood for. It was the completest negation of non-violence and of democracy which was not possible without the former.

The non-violent resistance described above required courage of a superior order to that needed in violent warfare. Forgiveness was the quality of the brave, not of the cowardly. Gandhiji here related a story from the Mahabharata, when one of the Pandava brothers was accidentally injured while living in disguise in the home of King Virata. The brothers not only hid what had happened, but for fear that harm might come to the host if a drop of blood touched the ground, they prevented it from doing so by means of a golden bowl. It was this type of forbearance and courage which Gandhiji wished every Indian to develop whether he was a Hindu, Mussalman, Christian, Parsi or Sikh. That alone could rescue them from their present fallen condition.

The lesson of non-violence was present in every religion but Gandhiji fondly believed that perhaps it was here in India that its practice had been reduced to a science. Innumerable saints had laid down their lives in *tapash-charya* until poets had felt that the Himalayas became purified in their snowy whiteness by means of their sacrifice. But all that practice of non-violence was nearly dead today. It was necessary to revive the eternal law of answering anger by love and violence by non-violence; and



where could this be more readily done than in this land of King Janaka and Ramachandra?

*Harijan*, 30-3-1947

## 131

## THE AIM OF LIFE

Gandhiji's weekly silence having commenced, his written message in Hindustani was read out to the congregation after the prayers. It was his earnest prayer that those who were present and those others whom his voice could reach should understand the aim of life. The aim of life was that they should serve the Power that had created them, and on Whose mercy or consent depended their very breath, by heartily serving its creation. That meant love, not hate which one saw everywhere. They had forgotten that aim and were either actually fighting each other or preparing for that fight. If they could not escape calamity, they should regard India's independence as an impossible dream. If they thought that they would get independence by the simple fact of the British power quitting the land, they were sadly mistaken. The British were leaving India. But if they continued fighting one another, some other power or powers would step in. If they thought they could fight the whole world with its weapons, it was a folly.

A friend had written, continued Gandhiji, that a sort of peace seemed to have been established in the Punjab through military occupation. That peace was the peace of the grave. The people were silently preparing for an open and deadlier fight. Weapons were being collected. After that even the military would find it impossible to control the people. It was his firm conviction that the peace established with the aid of the military or the police would be no peace. True peace would only come when at least one side, if not both, adopted the true bravery that non-violence gave.

Bihar had realized, said Gandhiji, that there was no bravery in killing women and children. It was sheer

cowardice. It would be a grand thing if Bihar could manifest the true bravery of silent strength and show thereby the true path of life to the whole world.

*Harijan*, 6-4-1947

## 132

## THE MESSAGE OF ASIA

Addressing the concluding session of the Inter-Asian Relations Conference on Wednesday the 2nd of April, 1947, in the Purana Quila at Delhi, Gandhiji said: "You, friends, have not seen the real India and you are not meeting in conference in the midst of real India. Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Lahore are big cities and are, therefore, influenced by the West. If you really want to see India at its best, you have to find it in the humble Bhangi homes of our villages. There are 7,00,000 of such villages and 38 crores of people inhabit them.

"If some of you see the villages, you will not be fascinated by the sight. You will have to scratch below the dung heap. I do not pretend to say that they were ever places of paradise. Today they are really dung heaps. They were not like that before. What I speak is not from history but from what I have seen myself. I have travelled from one end of India to the other and have seen the miserable specimens of humanity with lustreless eyes. They are India. In these humble cottages, in the midst of these dung heaps, are to be found the humble Bhangis in whom you find the concentrated essence of wisdom."

Stating that wisdom had come to the West from the East, Gandhiji said: "The first of these wise men was Zoroaster. He belonged to the East. He was followed by Buddha who belonged to East—India. Who followed Buddha? Jesus, who came from the East. Before Jesus was Moses who belonged to Palestine though he was born in Egypt. After Jesus came Mohammed. I omit any reference to Krishna and Rama and other lights. I do not call them lesser lights but they are less known to the literary world. All the same I do not know a single person in the

world to match these men of Asia. And then what happened? Christianity became disfigured when it went to the West. I am sorry to have to say that.

"I have told you the story in order to make you understand that what you see in the big cities is not the real India. Certainly, the carnage that is going on before our very eyes is a shameful thing. As I said yesterday, do not carry the memory of that carnage beyond the confines of India.

"What I want you to understand is the message of Asia. It is not to be learnt through the Western spectacles or by imitating the atom bomb. If you want to give a message to the West, it must be the message of love and the message of truth. I do not want merely to appeal to your head. I want to capture your heart.

"In this age of democracy, in this age of awakening of the poorest of the poor, you can redeliver this message with the greatest emphasis. You will complete the conquest of the West not through vengeance because you have been exploited, but with real understanding. I am sanguine if all of you put your hearts together—not merely heads—to understand the secret of the message these wise men of the East have left to us, and if we really become worthy of that great message, the conquest of the West will be completed. This conquest will be loved by the West itself.

"The West is today pining for wisdom. It is despairing of a multiplication of the atom bombs, because atom bombs mean utter destruction not merely of the West but of the whole world, as if the prophecy of the Bible is going to be fulfilled and there is to be a perfect deluge. It is up to you to tell the world of its wickedness and sin—that is the heritage your teachers and my teachers have taught Asia.

*Harijan, 20-4-1947*

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## ADVICE TO SIND HINDUS

Gandhiji's timely clarification of his advice to Sind Hindus has heartened them to face the future with courage and fortitude. Asked to clarify his advice that Sind Hindus should migrate in the event of partition, Gandhiji told Bhai Pratap Dayaldas of Hyderabad who met him at New Delhi:

"I said that you should suffer bravely, but non-violently unto death. But if you cannot do that and must take a disgraceful surrender of all including honour, your womenfolk and religion, in that case, the only and safe proper course for you to take is migration, not singly, but of all the Hindus and other non-Muslims."

*Harijan*, 25-5-1947

## HOW TO COMBAT HIMSA?

*Q.* 1. The leaders and followers of the League do not believe in attaining their object through non-violence. In such circumstances, how is it possible to melt their hearts or to convince them of the evil of violent action?

*A.* 1. Violence can only be effectively met by non-violence. This is an old, established truth. The questioner does not really understand the working of non-violence. If he did, he would have known that the weapon of violence, even if it was the atom bomb, became useless when matched against true non-violence. That very few understand how to wield this mighty weapon is true. It requires a lot of understanding and strength of mind. It is unlike what is needed in military schools and colleges. The difficulty one experiences in meeting Himsa with Ahimsa arises from weakness of mind.

*Q.* 2. Today many people are beginning to feel that a clash, possibly of a violent character, with the supporters

of the League is inevitable. The nationalists feel that until the League agrees to the partition of Bengal and the Punjab, its demand for Pakistan is unjust. What means should they adopt to meet the situation?

A. 2. If the answer to the first question is held valid, the second question does not arise. However, the question may be discussed for a clearer understanding. If the majority of the Muslims obey Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah, a violent conflict should be out of the question, or if the majority of the Hindus take their stand on non-violence, no matter how much violence the Muslims use, it is bound to fail. One thing, however, should be perfectly understood. The votaries of non-violence cannot harbour violence in thought, let alone the question of doing it. If Pakistan is wrong, partition of Bengal and the Punjab will not make it right. Two wrongs will not make one right.

Q. 3. The majority of the socialists claim that if there was a socialist revolution the economic question will come to the forefront throwing the communal conflict in the background. Do you agree? If such a revolution takes place, will it promote the establishment of the Kingdom of God which you call Ramarajya?

A. 3. The economic conflict you envisage is likely to make the Hindu-Muslim tension less acute. Even the end of the Hindu-Muslim conflict will not end all our troubles. What is happening is this. With the end of slavery and the dawn of independence, all the weaknesses of society are bound to come to the surface. I do not see any reason to be unnecessarily upset about it. If we keep our balance at such a time, every tangle will be solved. As far as the economic question is concerned it has to be solved in any case. Today, there is gross economic inequality. The basis of socialism is economic equality. There can be no Ramarajya in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat. I accepted the theory of socialism even while I was in South Africa. My opposition to the socialists and others consists in attacking violence as a means of effecting any lasting reform.



Q. 4. You say that a Raja, a Zamindar or a capitalist should be a trustee for the poor. Do you think that any such exists today? Or do you expect them to be so transformed?

A. 4. I think that some very few exist even today, though not in the full sense of the term. They are certainly moving in that direction. It can, however, be asked whether the present Rajas and others can be expected to become trustees of the poor. If they do not become trustees of their own accord, force of circumstances will compel the reform unless they court utter destruction. When Panchayat Raj is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the Zamindars, the capitalists and the Rajas can hold away only so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-co-operate with the evil of Zamindari or capitalism, it must die of inanition. In Panchayat Raj only the Panchayat will be obeyed and the Panchayat can only work through the law of their making.

New Delhi, 25-5-'47

*Harijan*, 1-6-1947

## WEAPON OF THE BRAVE

The talk went about that Gandhiji was staying in Bihar, no doubt, in order to help the Muslims but the result would be that the Hindus would be butchered. He had said to the Hindus that even if the Muslims went mad, they should not lose their reason. He was not ashamed of giving that advice to anyone. The Hindus were in a minority in the Punjab, but there were the brave Sikhs, each one of whom considered himself equivalent to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  lakh. Did it mean that one Sikh could shed as much blood as  $1\frac{1}{4}$  lakh? He thought not. It meant that one Sikh could stand up to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  lakh persons against him. In that sense it was a tribute to the bravery of the Sikhs. Not one Sikh should stand by and see a wrong perpetrated. He should give his life to prevent it. His advice, therefore, to the

Sikhs also was that whatever might have been the use of the sword in Sikh history; in this age of the atom bomb there was no weapon like non-violent resistance. It did not make cowards of men. It infused courage even in women. If he recommended non-violence, it was because he was convinced that it was the weapon of the really brave.

### **Analogy of the Mad Dog**

Some one asked Gandhiji what should be done with a mad dog? His reply was that if the friend meant a mad dog literally, he himself would say that in the first place a dog would not go mad amongst really god-fearing men. But supposing in the presence of men who considered themselves of God, they found a dog running amuck, they would naturally kill it rather than allow many of themselves to be bitten by a rabid dog and be sent to Kasauli for treatment as they used to before.

But what if a human being went mad? His own brother had gone mad. He (Gandhiji) was a small boy of ten at that time. But his mother and father did not have the mad son killed. They sent for Vaidyas and doctors and had him treated and cured.

"You are all my blood brothers whether you are Hindus or Muslims. Supposing you go mad and I have a battalion at my command, would I have you shot? No. I would not like to be shot myself, if I went mad. My friend's son went mad, I had to send him to the lock-up but I would not have him killed."

*Harijan, 8-6-1947*

## NON-VIOLENCE OF THE BRAVE

Gandhiji had no doubt that non-violence was as effective a weapon against communal strife as it had proved in their struggle against the British. The people had followed him then, because they knew they could not face the might of British arms in any other way. It was the non-violence of the weak. That won't serve the purpose in communal strife. For that was required pure non-violence of the brave.

Speaking in the prayer meeting Gandhiji said that while he admitted his impotency regarding the spread of the Ahimsa of the brave and the strong as distinguished from that of the weak, the admission was not meant to imply that he did not know how that inestimable virtue was to be cultivated. Consciousness of the living presence of God within one was undoubtedly the first requisite. Acquisition of this consciousness did not require or mean temple-going. The daily recitation, however, carried with it certain well-defined implications. Assuming that the millions of India daily recited at a given time the name of God as Rama, Allah, Khuda, Ahura Mazda and Jehovah but the recitation was not free from drunkenness, debauchery, gambling on the market or in gambling dens, black-marketing etc., the Ramadhun was a vain and inglorious effort. One with a wicked heart could never be conscious of the all-purifying presence of God. Therefore it was truer (if it was a fact) to say that India was not ready for the lesson of Ahimsa of the strong than that no programme had been devised for the teaching. It would be perfectly just to say that the programme just mentioned for the Ahimsa of the strong was not as attractive as that devised for the non-violence of the weak had proved to be. He hoped that at least his hearers who daily attended the prayer meetings would lead the way in expressing in their lives the Ahimsa of the strong.

New Delhi, 22-6-'47

*Harijan*, 29-6-1947

## RIGHTS OR DUTIES ?

"I want to deal with one great evil that is afflicting society today. The capitalist and the Zamindar talk of their rights, the labourer on the other hand of his, the prince of his divine right to rule, the ryot of his to resist it. If all simply insist on rights and no duties, there will be utter confusion and chaos.

"If instead of insisting on rights everyone does his duty, there will immediately be the rule of order established among mankind. There is no such thing as the divine right of kings to rule and the humble duty of the ryots to pay respectful obedience to their masters. Whilst it is true that these hereditary inequalities must go as being injurious to the well-being of society, the unabashed assertion of rights of the hitherto down-trodden millions is equally injurious, if not more so to the same well-being. The latter behaviour is probably calculated to injure the millions rather than the few claimants of divine or other rights. They could but die a brave or cowardly death but those few dead would not bring in the orderly life of blissful contentment. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the correlation of rights and duties. I venture to suggest that rights that do not flow directly from duty well performed are not worth having. They will be usurpations, sooner discarded the better. A wretched parent who claims obedience from his children without first doing his duty by them excites nothing but contempt. It is distortion of religious precept for a dissolute husband to expect compliance in every respect from his dutiful wife. But the children who flout their parent who is ever ready to do his duty towards them would be considered ungrateful and would harm themselves more than their parent. The same can be said about husband and wife. If you apply this simple and universal rule to employers and labourers, landlords and tenants, the princes and their subjects, or the Hindus and the Muslims, you will find that the happiest relation can be established in all walks of life without creating disturbance in and dislocation of

life and business which you see in India as in the other parts of the world. What I call the law of Satyagraha is to be deduced from an appreciation of duties and rights flowing therefrom."

*Harijan, 6-7-1947*

## WHO IS A SOCIALIST ?

Socialism is a beautiful word and so far as I am aware, in socialism all the members of society are equal—none low, none high. In the individual body the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. This is socialism.

In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee are all on the same level. In terms of religion there is no duality in socialism. It is all unity. Looking at society all the world over there is nothing but duality or plurality. Unity is conspicuous by its absence. This man is high, that one is low, that is a Hindu, that a Muslim, third a Christian, fourth a Parsi, fifth a Sikh, sixth a Jew. Even among these there are subdivisions. In the unity of my conception there is perfect unity in the plurality of designs.

In order to reach this state we may not look on things philosophically and say that we need not make a move until all are converted to socialism. Without changing our life we may go on giving addresses, forming parties and hawk-like seize the game when it comes our way. This is no socialism. The more we treat it as game to be seized, the farther it must recede from us.

Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeros to the one and the first zero will account for ten and every addition will account for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginner is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning, multiplicity of zeros will also produce zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing zeros will be so much waste.



This socialism is as pure as crystal. It, therefore, required crystal-like means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalized by cutting off the prince's head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employed. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth. Are not non-violence and truth twins? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. Non-violence is embedded in truth and *vice versa*. Hence has it been said that they are faces of the same coin. Either is inseparable from the other. Read the coin either way. The spelling of words will be different. The value is the same. This blessed state is unattainable without perfect purity. Harbour impurity of mind or body and you have untruth and violence in you.

Therefore, only truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted socialists will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world. To my knowledge there is no country in the world which is purely socialistic. Without the means described above the existence of such a society is impossible.

New Delhi, 6-7-'47

*Harijan*, 13-7-1947

## THE ROOT CAUSE OF PARTITION

Many people come to Gandhiji and express their dissatisfaction over the partition of India. They know that Gandhiji has always been opposed to it. Why does he not give tangible form to his opposition? they ask. It is wrong for him to say that he is a spent bullet or that the country is not behind him. "Give us the lead and you will see for yourself whether the country is behind you or not." Gandhiji is sometimes amused by such talk. Against whom is he to give the lead? It was not the British who had partitioned the country. It had been done with the consent of the Congress howsoever reluctantly. There was only one way to avoid the calamity and that was by the non-violence of the brave. But how could the people develop it overnight? Talking to some friends on this subject he said that the

leaders had agreed to the partition as the last resort. They did not feel that they had made a mistake. Rather than let the whole country go to the dogs, they agreed to the partition, hoping to give the country a much needed rest. He felt differently. He had said that he would rather let the whole country be reduced to ashes than yield an inch to violence. But non-violence was his creed. It was not so with the Congress. The Congress had accepted non-violence as a policy. Badshah Khan was the only leader who believed in non-violence as a creed. Even he had not imbibed the doctrine through and through.

"I have admitted my mistake," he continued. "I thought our struggle was based on non-violence. Whereas in reality it was no more than passive resistance which essentially is a weapon of the weak. It leads naturally to armed resistance whenever possible." In South Africa the English Chairman of his meeting, the late Mr. Hosken, had said that he (Gandhiji) was fighting for the cause of the weak. Therefore he was resorting to passive resistance. Gandhiji had contradicted the statement. He had said that they were not weak in the sense the Chairman meant. The struggle in the Transvaal was not passive resistance. It was based on non-violence. The source of their strength was soul force, not physical force.

Intoxicated with his success in South Africa, he came to India. Here too the struggle bore fruit. But he now realized that it was not based on non-violence. If he had known so then, he would not have launched the struggle. But God wanted to take that work from him. So He blurred his vision. It was because their struggle was not non-violent that they today witnessed loot, arson and murder.

A friend interposed that Gandhiji had always maintained that our struggle was based on non-violence, though of the weak.

Gandhiji said that his was a mistaken statement. There was no such thing as non-violence of the weak. Non-violence and weakness was a contradiction in terms. He had never experienced the dark despair that was today within him. He was a born fighter who did not know failure. But he was groping today.

"But why should you feel despondent?" persisted the friend. "I see clearly," replied Gandhiji, "that if the country cannot be turned to non-violence it will be bad for it and the world. It will mean goodbye to freedom. It might even mean a military dictatorship. I am day and night thinking how non-violence of the brave can be cultivated.

"I said at the Asiatic Conference that I hoped the fragrance of the non-violence of India would permeate the whole world. I often wonder if that hope will materialize."

New Delhi, 18-7-'47

*Harijan*, 27-7-1947

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### THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE

Gandhiji said in his after-prayer speech:

It is said that my speeches nowadays are depressing. Some even suggest that I should not speak at all. This multitude of advisers reminds me of a painter who had exposed his painting in a shop window without glass inviting critics to mark the parts they did not like. The result was a daub. The painter had simply tried to show that it was impossible to please all parties. He was, therefore, satisfied that he had painted a good picture. His business was to produce a work which satisfied his artistic taste. Mine is a similar case. I hope I never speak for the sake of speaking. I speak because I feel that I have something to say to the people. It is true that I do not agree with what many of my closest friends have done or are doing. Whilst I am in Delhi and I have an opinion about some current events, I cannot help giving that opinion. And what are the differences that matter? If you analyse them you would find only one fundamental difference to which all the others could be traced. Non-violence is my creed. It never was of the Congress. With the Congress it has always been a policy. A policy takes the shape of a creed whilst it lasts, no longer. The Congress had every right to change it when

it found necessary. A creed can never admit of any change. Now though according to the Congress constitution the policy abides, the practice has undoubtedly altered the policy. Technicians may quarrel with the fact. You and I cannot, must not. Why should not the makers of the present Congress change their policy in fact? The law will take care of itself. It should also be noted that in the constitution the word *peaceful* is used, not *non-violent*.

In Bombay when the Congress met in 1934 I tried hard to have the word *peaceful* replaced by *non-violent* and I failed. Therefore, it is open to give the word *peaceful* a meaning probably less than that of *non-violent*. I see none. But my opinion is irrelevant. It is for the *savants* to determine the difference, if any. All that you and I need to realize is that the Congress practice is not non-violent today in the accepted sense of the term. If the Congress was pledged to the policy of non-violence, there would be no army supported by it. But she sports an army which may eat up the civilians and establish military rule in India unless the people listen to me. Am I to give up all hope of their ever listening to me? I cannot do it whilst there is breath left in me. And if the people do not wish to listen to my non-violent dirge, there is no reason for critics to dissuade me from speaking to the public.

New Delhi, 15-7-'47

*Harijan*, 27-7-1947

## SECULAR

Reverend Kellas, Principal of the Scottish Church College, came to see Gandhiji yesterday with some members of his staff. The principal question discussed was in connection with the relation between education, religion and the State. Gandhiji expressed the opinion that the State should undoubtedly be secular. Everyone living in it should be entitled to profess his religion without let or hindrance, so long as the citizen obeyed the common law of the land. There should be no interference with missionary effort, but no mission could enjoy the patronage of the State as it did during the foreign regime.

While discussing these matters with Principal Kellas, Gandhiji incidentally remarked that although we had thrown overboard British political supremacy, we had not yet been able to throw overboard the cultural one. In his characteristic style, he said, "We have discarded foreign power, not the unseen foreign influence." What he would like the new India of his dream to do was to lay the foundation of a new life in keeping with its natural surroundings. In every State in the world today, violence, even if it were for so-called defensive purpose only, enjoyed a status which was in conflict with the better elements of life. "The organization of the best in society," was the aim to which new India should dedicate herself; and this could be done only if we succeeded in demolishing the status which had been given to *goondaism* today.

One of the scientist members of the staff then asked Gandhiji what scientific men should do if they were now asked by the free Indian Government to engage in researches in furtherance of war and the atom bomb? Gandhiji promptly replied, "Scientists to be worth the name should resist such a State unto death."

Calcutta, 17-8-'47

*Harijan*, 24-8-1947



## NON-VIOLENCE AND FREE INDIA

There was a small gathering of local students the other day in Gandhiji's camp at Beliaghata. Gandhiji first asked them if any of them had taken part in the riots, to which they replied in the negative. Whatever they had done was in self-defence; hence it was no part of the riot.

This gave Gandhiji an opportunity of speaking on some of the vital problems connected with non-violence. He said that mankind had all along tried to justify violence and war in terms of unavoidable self-defence. It was a simple rule that the violence of the aggressor could only be defeated by superior violence of the defender. All over the world, men had thus been caught in a mad race for armaments, and no one yet knew at what point of time the world would be really safe enough for turning the sword into the plough. Mankind, he stated, had not yet mastered the true art of self-defence.

But great teachers, who had practised what they preached, had successfully shown that true defence lay along the path of non-retaliation. It might sound paradoxical; but this is what he meant. Violence always thrived on counter-violence. The aggressor had always a purpose behind his attack; he wanted something to be done, some object to be surrendered by the defender. Now, if the defender steeled his heart and was determined not to surrender even one inch, and at the same time to resist the temptation of matching the violence of the aggressor by violence, the latter could be made to realize in a short while that it would not be paying to punish the other party and his will could not be imposed in that way. This would involve suffering. It was this unalloyed self-suffering which was the truest form of self-defence which knew no surrender.

Someone might ask that if through such non-resistance the defender was likely to lose his life, how could it be called self-defence? Jesus lost his life on the Cross and the

Roman Pilate won. Gandhiji did not agree. Jesus had won, as the world's history had abundantly shown. What did it matter if the body was dissolved in the process, so long as by the Christ's act of non-resistance, the forces of good were released in society?

This art of true self-defence by means of which man gained his life by losing it, had been mastered and exemplified in the history of individuals. The method had not been perfected for application by large masses of mankind. India's Satyagraha was a very imperfect experiment in that direction. Hence, during the Hindu-Muslim quarrel it proved a failure on the whole.

Two or three days ago, before this meeting with the students, Gandhiji unburdened his heart in this respect to Professor Stuart Nelson, who had come to see him before he left for his college in America. Professor Nelson asked him why it was that Indians who had more or less successfully gained independence through peaceful means, were now unable to check the tide of civil war through the same means? Gandhiji replied that it was indeed a searching question which he must answer. He confessed that it had become clear to him that what he had mistaken for Satyagraha was not Satyagraha but passive resistance—a weapon of the weak. Indians harboured ill-will and anger against their erstwhile rulers, while they pretended to resist them non-violently. Their resistance was, therefore, inspired by violence and not by regard for the man in the British, whom they should convert through Satyagraha.

Now that the British were voluntarily quitting India, apparent non-violence had gone to pieces in a moment. The attitude of violence which we had secretly harboured, in spite of the restraint imposed by the Indian National Congress, now recoiled upon us and made us fly at each other's throats when the question of the distribution of power came up. If India could now discover a way of sublimating the force of violence which had taken a communal turn, and turning it into constructive, peaceful ways, whereby differences of interests could be liquidated, it would be a great day indeed.

Gandhiji then proceeded to say that it was indeed true that many English friends had warned him that the so-called non-violent non-co-operation of India was not really non-violent. It was the passivity of the weak and not the non-violence of the stout in heart who would never surrender their sense of human unity and brotherhood even in the midst of conflict of interests, who would ever try to convert and not coerce their adversary.

Gandhiji proceeded to say that this was indeed true. He had all along laboured under an illusion. But he was never sorry for it. He realized that if his vision were not covered by that illusion, India would never have reached the point which it had today.

India was now free, and the reality was now clearly revealed to him. Now that the burden of subjection had been lifted, all the forces of good had to be marshalled in one great effort to build a country which forsook the accustomed method of violence in order to settle human conflicts whether it was between two States or between two sections of the same people. He had yet the faith that India would rise to the occasion and prove to the world that the birth of two new States would be, not a menace, but a blessing to the rest of mankind. It was the duty of Free India to perfect the instrument of non-violence for dissolving collective conflicts, if its freedom was going to be really worth while.

Calcutta, 20-8-'47

*Harijan*, 31-8-1947

## HOW TO SAVE THE COW?

Let us at the outset realize that cow worship in the religious sense is largely confined to Gujarat, Marwad, the United Provinces and Bihar. Marwadis and Gujaratis being enterprising merchants, have succeeded in making the greatest noise without at the same time devoting their business talent to the solution of the very difficult question of conserving the cattle wealth of India.

It is obviously wrong legally to enforce one's religious practice on those who do not share that religion.

In so far as the pure economic necessity of cow protection is concerned, it can be easily secured if the question was considered on that ground alone. In that event all the dry cattle, the cows who give less milk than their keep, and the aged and unfit cattle would be slaughtered without a second thought. This soulless economy has no place in India, although the inhabitants of this land of paradoxes may be, indeed, are guilty of many soulless acts.

Then how can the cow be saved without having to kill her off when she ceases to give the economic quantity of milk or when she becomes otherwise an uneconomic burden? The answer to the question can be summed up as follows:

1. By the Hindus performing their duty towards the cow and her progeny. If they did so, our cattle would be the pride of India and the world. The contrary is the case today.

2. By learning the science of cattle breeding. Today there is perfect anarchy in this work.

3. By replacing the present cruel method of castration by the humane method practised in the West.

4. By thorough reform of the *pinjarapoles* of India which are today, as a rule, managed ignorantly and without any plan by men who do not know their work.

5. When these primary things are done, it will be found that the Muslims will, of their own accord, recognize

the necessity, if only for the sake of their Hindu brethren, of not slaughtering cattle for beef or otherwise.

The reader will observe that behind the foregoing requirements lies one thing and that is Ahimsa, otherwise known as universal compassion. If that supreme thing is realized, everything else becomes easy. Where there is Ahimsa, there is infinite patience, inner calm, discrimination, self-sacrifice and true knowledge. Cow protection is not an easy thing. Much money is wasted in its name. Nevertheless, in the absence of Ahimsa the Hindus have become destroyers instead of saviours of the cow. It is even more difficult than the removal of foreign rule from India.

Calcutta, 22-8-'47

[Note: The average quantity of milk that the cow in India yields is said to be roughly 2 lbs. per day, that of New Zealand 14 lbs., of England 15 lbs., of Holland 20 lbs. The index figure for health goes up in proportion to the increase in the yield of milk.

23-8-'47

— M. K. G. ]

*Harijan*, 31-8-1947

## NON-VIOLENT LABOUR AS MAGNET

(At a gathering of the workers in Motiaburz)

Gandhiji wanted to say a few words to the workmen in the working men's locality. He hoped that there was no distinction between the Hindus and the Muslims in labour. They were all labourers. If the communal canker entered the labour ranks, both would weaken labour and therefore, themselves and the country. Labour was a great leveller of all distinctions. If they realized that truth, he would like them to go a step further. Labour, because it chose to remain unintelligent, either became subservient or insolently believed in damaging capitalists' goods and machinery or even in killing capitalists. He was a labourer by conviction and a Bhangi. As such his interests were bound with those of labour. As such he wished to tell them that violence would never save them. They would



be killing the goose that laid the golden egg. What he had been saying for years was that labour was far superior to capital. Without labour gold, silver and copper were a useless burden. It was labour which extracted precious ore from the bowels of the earth. He could quite conceive labour existing without metal. Labour was priceless, not gold. He wanted marriage between capital and labour. They could work wonders in co-operation. But that could happen only when labour was intelligent enough to co-operate with itself and then offer co-operation with capital on terms of honourable equality. Capital controlled labour because it knew the art of combination. Drops in separation could only fade away; drops in co-operation made the ocean which carried on its broad bosom ocean greyhounds. Similarly, if all the labourers in any part of the world combined together, they could not be tempted by higher wages or helplessly allow themselves to be attracted for, say, a pittance. A true and non-violent combination of labour would act like a magnet attracting to it all the needed capital. Capitalists would then exist only as trustees. When that happy day dawned, there would be no difference between capital and labour. The labour will have ample food, good and sanitary dwellings, and the necessary education for their children, ample leisure for self-education and proper medical assistance.

Calcutta, 28-8-'47.

*Harijan*, 7-9-1947

## PRESS STATEMENT

I regret to have to report to you that last night some young men brought to the compound a bandaged man. He was reported to have been attacked by some Muslims. The Prime Minister had him examined and the report was that he had no marks of stabbing, which he was said to have received. The seriousness of the injury, however, is not the chief point. What I want to emphasize is that these young men tried to become judges and executioners.

This was about 10 p.m. Calcutta time. They began to shout at the top of their voices. My sleep was disturbed but I tried to lie quiet, not knowing what was happening. I heard the window panes being smashed. I had lying on either side of me two very brave girls. They would not sleep, and without my knowledge, for my eyes were closed, they went among the small crowd and tried to pacify them. Thank God, the crowd did not do any harm to them. The old Muslim lady in the house endearingly called Bi Amma and a young Muslim stood near my matting, I suppose, to protect me from harm.

The noise continued to swell. Some had entered the central hall, and began to knock open the many doors. I felt that I must get up and face the angry crowds. I stood at the threshold of one of the doors. Friendly faces surrounded me and would not let me move forward. My vow of silence admitted of my breaking it on such occasions and I broke it and began to appeal to the angry young men to be quiet. I asked the Bengali grand-daughter-in-law to translate my few words into Bengali. All to no purpose. Their ears were closed against reason.

I clasped my hands in the Hindu fashion nothing doing. More window panes began to crack. The friendly ones in the crowd tried to pacify the crowd. There were police officers. Be it said to their credit that they did not try to exercise authority. They too clasped their hands in

appeal. A lathi blow missed me and everybody round me. A brick aimed at me hurt a Muslim friend standing by. The two girls would not leave me and held on to me to the last. Meanwhile the Police Superintendent and his officers came in. They too did not use force. They appealed to me to retire. Then there was a chance of their stilling the young men. After a time the crowd melted.

What happened outside the compound gate I do not know except that the police had to use tear gas to disperse the crowd. Meanwhile, Dr. P. C. Ghosh, Ananda Babu and Dr. Nripen walked in and after some discussion left. Happily, Shaheed Saheb had gone home to prepare for tomorrow's proposed departure for Noakhali. In view of the above ugly incident, which no one could tell where it would lead to, I could not think of leaving Calcutta for Noakhali.

What is the lesson of the incident? It is clear to me that if India is to retain her dearly-won independence all men and women must completely forget lynch law. What was attempted was an indifferent imitation of it. If Muslims misbehaved, the complainants could, if they would not go to the ministers, certainly go to me or my friend, Shaheed Saheb. The same thing applies to Muslim complainants. There is no way of keeping the peace in Calcutta or elsewhere if the elementary rule of civilized society is not observed. Let them not think of the savagery of the Punjab or outside India. The recognition of the golden rule of never taking the law into one's own hands has no exceptions.

My Secretary, Dev Prakash, in Patna, wires: 'Public agitated Punjab happenings. Feel statement necessary impressing duty of public and the Press.' Shri Dev Prakash is never unduly agitated. There must be some unguarded word by the Press. If that is so, at this time when we are sitting on a powder magazine, the Forth Estate has to be extra-wise and reticent. Unscrupulousness will act as a lighted match. I hope every editor and reporter will realize his duty to the full.

One thing I must mention. I have an urgent message calling me to the Punjab. I hear all kinds of rumours

about recrudescence of trouble in Calcutta. I hope they are exaggerated, if not quite baseless. The citizens of Calcutta have to reassure me that there would be nothing wrong in Calcutta and that peace, once restored, will not be broken.

From the very first day of peace, that is August 14th last, I have been saying that the peace might only be a temporary lull. There was no miracle. Will the foreboding prove true and will Calcutta again lapse into the law of the jungle? Let us hope not, let us pray to the Almighty that He will touch our hearts and ward off the recurrence of insanity.

Since the foregoing was written, i.e. about 4 o'clock, during silence, I have come to know fairly well the details of what has happened in various parts of the city. Some of the places which were safe till yesterday have suddenly become unsafe. Several deaths have taken place. I saw two bodies of very poor Muslims. I saw also some wretched-looking Muslims being carted away to a place of safety. I quite see that last night's incidents so fully described above, pale into insignificance before this flare-up. Nothing that I may do in the way of going about in the open conflagration could possibly arrest it.

I have told the friends who saw me in the evening what their duty is. What part am I to play in order to stop it? The Sikhs and the Hindus must not forget what the East Punjab has done during these few days. Now the Muslims in the West Punjab have begun the mad career. It is said that the Sikhs and the Hindus are enraged over the Punjab happenings.

I have adverted above to an urgent call for me to go to the Punjab. But now that the Calcutta bubble seems to have burst, with what face can I go to the Punjab? The weapon which has hitherto proved infallible for me is fasting. To put an appearance before a yelling crowd does not always work. It certainly did not last night. What my word in person cannot do, my fast may. It may touch the hearts of all the warring elements in the Punjab if it does in Calcutta. I, therefore, begin fasting from 8-15 tonight to end only if and when sanity returns to Calcutta.

I shall, as usual permit myself to add salt and soda bicarb to the water I may wish to drink during the fast.

If the people of Calcutta wish me to proceed to the Punjab and help the people there, they have to enable me to break the fast as early as may be.

Calcutta, 1-9-'47

*Harijan*, 14-9-1947

## 146

## THE FAST

Gandhiji began his fast for allaying the communal frenzy and restoration of sanity in Calcutta at 8-15 p.m. on the 1st of September, 1947, and broke it at 9-15 p.m. on the 4th instant with a glass of sweet lime juice which Mr. Suhrawardy served to him.

It is necessary to go back into the history of the fast, in order to prepare the background of the story as to how and under what conditions it was finally broken.

From the 14th of August till the 31st peace reigned. That evening there was a demonstration against Gandhiji's peace mission. On the following morning communal frenzy, in a very intense form, once more swept over several parts of the city. There were already indications in the morning that Gandhiji might fast; but the final decision was taken at eleven in the evening when, according to him, friends had failed to show any satisfactory reason why he should not take the contemplated step. The last sweet drink was taken at 7 p.m. He made the provisional decision at 8-15 p.m.

Any way, the fast was taken and perhaps partly on account of it and partly also because the common citizen, who had tasted peace after one year's life in the trenches, did not want the recrudescence, the riots rapidly cooled down, so that on the 4th the Government as well as the public could come and report to Gandhiji that not one incident had taken place during the last twenty-four hours. Parties after parties came to Gandhiji either with reports or with promises, and in spite of his weak state, he insisted



on speaking in his feeble voice to every batch of interviewers. Dr. Sunil Bose, the celebrated physician and brother of Netaji, came to Gandhiji with a request that he must take plenty of rest and not talk at all. But Gandhiji told him he could not exclude relevant talk. Such necessary loss of energy was inevitable. He was certainly desirous of living, but not at the cost of work that duty demanded. "I can't interrupt the work," he said to Dr. Bose, "which has made me fast and which makes me live. If my life ebbs away in the process, I would feel happy."

This was at half past eleven in the morning. A few minutes afterwards a batch of twenty-seven friends belonging to Central Calcutta came to see him. During the communal disturbance of the last year, resistance groups had grown up here and there, and the present party represented such a group in Central Calcutta which had become the focus of the recrudescence on Monday. They had come to Gandhiji with the promise that henceforth there would be no more incidents in their part of the city and he should, therefore, break his fast now, otherwise all of them were prepared to go on a sympathetic fast with him. Gandhiji argued long with them, and what he said in substance was this: The present occasion was not one in which there was scope for a sympathetic fast. Hindus and Mussalmans had fought for one whole year, at the end of which the major parties had agreed that India should be divided into two States. Both had Hindu and Muslim subjects. It was now time for every one to create the sense of common citizenship, to rebuild the land so that men might taste the fruits of freedom. To this end all should work. Gandhiji said that if the friends had come to him only for the sake of saving his life, it was nothing.

Referring to the Poona Fast which ended with the desired amendment of the Communal Award, it was suggested by some that though the amendment was not to their desire, they accepted it for the sake of saving his life. This was a wholly wrong approach. Such fasts were intended to stir the conscience and remove mental sluggishness. Truth could not be sacrificed even for the sake of saving a life, however precious it was. Gandhiji, therefore, warned

the present company that they should create real Hindu-Muslim unity by educating the people in a sense of common citizenship of the State, where every single man enjoyed perfect equality of rights which flowed from duty performed. If they worked with this aim in view, and succeeded after a few days' effort in making the Muslims in Calcutta feel safe where they now did not, it would be time for him to break the fast. Gandhiji was clearly of opinion that although his work was now confined to Calcutta, yet his one aim with respect to the Hindu-Muslim question was that the solution would be complete only when the minority, whether in the Indian Union or in Pakistan, felt perfectly safe even if they were in the minority of one. There would be no favoured and no depressed community anywhere. All should forget their religious affiliations. He was working to this end. He was working in such a manner that the majority community in each State should go forward and create the necessary conditions of freedom.

Some one asked him : Was it possible that his fast would have any effect on the anti-social elements in society? Today, i.e. during the present recrudescence, it was this element which had gained the upper hand. Could their hearts be converted by Gandhiji's crucifixion? Gandhiji's answer was very clear and emphatic. He said that goondas were there because we had made them so. During one year of past anarchy, it was understandable how these elements in society had gained respectability. But the war between Pakistanis and those for Undivided India had ended. It was time for peace-loving citizens to assert themselves and isolate *goondaism*. Non-violent non-co-operation was a universal remedy. Good was self-existent, evil was not. It was like a parasite living on and round good. It would die of itself when the support that good gave was withdrawn. The heart of the anti-social elements may or may not be changed; it would be enough if they were made to feel that the better elements of society were asserting themselves in the interests of peace and in the interests of normality.

To the interviewers from Central Calcutta Gandhiji's advice, therefore, was that they should desist from a

sympathetic fast, go forth among the oppressed in each quarter, assure them that they were safe, and rebuild life so that safety would be a permanent feature of the new State of India. He would personally have loved to move about from quarter to quarter in Calcutta in order to place his views before the various bodies, but his physical condition would not permit it. If others worked, how could he rest? Yet he was bound to make his contribution. He felt that it should be in the shape of a fast.

The friends from Central Calcutta were followed by others. There came a deputation from the Bar Association of Calcutta with the promise that its members would do all that lay within their power to restore peace. Friends from Belliaghata, who had a few weeks back looked upon Gandhiji's peace mission with suspicion, had been electrified by the fast. They had appreciated now the full significance of the mission and had, with all their energy, set about the task of rehabilitating the deserted Muslim *bustees*. Pressmen who had met the evacuees who had returned home testified to the sincerity and solicitude with which those who had driven them away a few weeks back, now treated them. All this was good news for Gandhiji, but yet he did not reach the point when the fast could be broken.

Towards evening, Sjt. N. C. Chatterjee, President of the Hindu Mahasabha, Debendra Nath Mookerjee, its Secretary, Sardar Niranjan Singh Talib, Editor of the *Desh Darpan*, Dr. G. Jilani of the Muslim League, Dr. Abdur Rashid Chowdhury and Mohibur Rahaman of the Pakistan Seamen's Union came accompanied by some other friends to report on the quiet and with their request to Gandhiji to break his fast. Rajaji, the Governor of West Bengal, Acharya Kripalani, Dr. P. C. Ghosh and Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy were also there. They had a long discussion with Gandhiji which left him rather worn out. Gandhiji heard what they said and did most of the talking. This is what he had to say.

He said that ever since the 14th of August although he had relished the fraternization between the Hindus and

the Mussalmans, yet he looked on the ebullition of emotion with caution and reserve. If the feeling was due entirely to friendship newly found, to the sense of brotherhood through common citizenship newly attained, there would be more signs of it e.g., in intensified efforts for rehabilitation. That sign was lacking. The recrudescence had then come. Therefore, Gandhiji felt he must fast. God had at least given him the capacity to work and die for communal peace. If there were anti-social elements in society, where a rowdy or a goonda plundered or killed a man whether Hindu or Muslim, his fast might not affect him. He knew his limitations. He fasted for the restoration of communal harmony. The sanity that had been in evidence for the last twenty-four hours was not enough for him. If the present company was going to assure him that it was a sincere affair and was going to be permanent, he would expect them to give him something in writing. It must state that supposing Hindu-Muslim riots broke out once more in Calcutta, they should assure him that they would give their lives in the attempt to quell the riots. If they agreed, that would be enough. They must so work from tomorrow that real peace and common citizenship was created as a feature of Calcutta life, no matter what happened elsewhere. Communal peace should be their prime occupation. Their other occupations or avocations must henceforth occupy a second place.

There was another matter, but that was a condition which automatically attached itself to the situation. As in Bihar, as in Noakhali, so also in Calcutta, he wanted to tell the friends who were making themselves responsible for the break of his fast, that if communal frenzy broke out in Calcutta again, he might have to go on an *irrevocable* fast. The present fast was meant to activize the better, peace-loving and wise elements in society, to rescue them from mental sluggishness and make goodness active.

Realizing their responsibility, the friends retired to another room. Free and frank discussions took place between them. Suspicions were freely expressed, fears that the signatories might not rise to the heights demanded of them were discussed in an atmosphere of frankness, and



finally came the decision to sign the document with all its implications.

Gandhiji felt glad. He took the signatories at their word, prayed that God might give them the courage and strength to implement their promise in daily life from the following morning; and with that prayer on his lips, he broke his fast last night. A heavy responsibility now lies upon the people of Bengal who have to implement the promise made sacred in Gandhiji's presence. May we have the requisite wisdom, strength and perseverance to see it through.

Calcutta, 5-9-'47

*Harijan*, 14-9-1947

# 147

## WHY FAST ?

*Q.* Why does Gandhiji resort to a fast when he faces extreme difficulties? What is the effect of this action on the life of the public of India?

*A.* Such a question has been put to me before but never, perhaps, precisely in the same terms. The answer, however, is easy. It is the last weapon in the armoury of the votary of Ahimsa. When human ingenuity fails, the votary fasts. This fasting quickens the spirit of prayer, that is to say, the fasting is a spiritual act and, therefore, addressed to God. The effect of such action on the life of the people is that when the person fasting is at all known to them their sleeping conscience is awakened. But there is the danger that the people through mistaken sympathy may act against their will in order to save the life of the loved one. This danger has got to be faced. One ought not to be deterred from right action when one is sure of the rightness. It can but promote circumspection. Such a fast is undertaken in obedience to the dictates of the inner voice and, therefore, prevents haste.

New Delhi, 10-12-'47

*Harijan*, 21-12-1947



## CURB ANGER

Turning to the burning question of the day Gandhiji said in his post-prayer address that he was prepared to understand their resentment and the consequent impatience. But if they deserved their independence, they would learn to subdue their resentment and trust their Government to do the best. He was presenting to them not his own way of non-violence, much as he would like to. He knew that he was out of court today. He suggested to them the adoption of the path that all democratic nations had adopted. In democracy the individual will was governed and limited by the social will which was the State, which was governed by and for democracy. If every individual took the law into his own hands there was no State, it became anarchy, i.e. absence of social law or State. That way lay destruction of liberty. Therefore, they should subdue their anger and let the State secure justice. In his opinion, if they permitted the State to do its duty, he had no doubt that every Hindu and every Sikh refugee would return to his home with honour and dignity. He was free to admit that they had suffered much in Pakistan, many homes had become desolate, lives had been lost, girls had been abducted, there had been forcible conversions. If they had self-control and did not allow their anger to get the better of their reason, girls would be returned, forcible conversions would be null and void and their properties returned to them. But this could not be done if they interfered with the even course of justice and thus spoiled their own case. They could not expect these things if they expected that their Muslim brothers and sisters should be driven out of India. He regarded any such thing as a monstrous proposition. They could not have the cake and eat it too. Moreover whilst it was true that the minorities, i.e. the Hindus and the Sikhs were badly treated in Pakistan, it was equally true that the East Punjab has also treated its minority, the Muslims, likewise. Guilt could not be weighed in golden scales. He had no data to measure the guilt on either side. It was surely sufficient to know that both the sides were

guilty. The universal way to have proper adjustment was for both the States to make a frank and full confession of guilt on either side and come to terms, failing agreement to resort to arbitration in the usual manner. The other and crude way was that of war. The thought repelled him. But there was no escape from it if there was neither agreement nor arbitration. Meanwhile, he hoped that wiser counsels would prevail and the Muslims who had not of their own free will chosen to migrate to Pakistan, should be asked by the neighbours to return to their homes with a perfect feeling of safety. This could not come about with the aid of the military. It could be done by return to sanity by the people concerned. He had made his final choice. He had no desire to live to see the ruin of India through fratricide. His incessant prayer was that God would remove him before any such calamity descended upon their fair land. And he asked the audience to join in the prayer.

*Harijan*, 28-9-1947

## 149

### PASSIVE RESISTANCE VERSUS NON-VIOLENCE

"I see that you have grasped the fundamental difference between passive resistance and non-violent resistance. Resistance both forms are, but you have to pay a very heavy price when your resistance is passive, in the sense of the weakness of the resister. Europe mistook the bold and brave resistance full of wisdom by Jesus of Nazareth for passive resistance, as if it was of the weak. As I read the New Testament for the first time, I detected no passivity, no weakness about Jesus as depicted in the four gospels, and the meaning became clearer to me when I read Tolstoy's *Harmony of the Gospels* and his other kindred writings. Has not the West paid heavily in regarding Jesus as a Passive Resister? Christendom has been responsible for the wars which put to shame even those described in the old Testament and other records, historical or semi-historical. I know that I speak under correction for I can but claim very superficial knowledge of history—modern or ancient.

"Coming to my personal experience, whilst we undoubtedly got through passive resistance our political freedom, over which lovers of peace like you and your good husband of the West are enthusiastic, we are daily paying the heavy price for the unconscious mistake we made or better still, I made in mistaking passive resistance for non-violent resistance. Had I not made the mistake, we would have been spared the humiliating spectacle of weak brother killing his weak brother thoughtlessly and inhumanly.

"I am only hoping and praying and I want all the friends here and in other parts of the world to hope and pray with me that this blood-bath will soon end and out of that, perhaps, inevitable butchery, will rise a new and robust India—not warlike, basely imitating the West in all its hideousness, but a new India learning the best that the West has to give and becoming the hope not only of Asia and Africa, but the whole of the aching world.

"I must confess that this is hoping against hope, for, we are today swearing by the military and all that naked physical force implies. Our statesmen have for over two generations declaimed against the heavy expenditure on armaments under the British regime, but now that freedom from political serfdom has come, our military expenditure has increased and still threatens to increase and of this we are proud! There is not a voice raised against it in our legislative chambers. In spite, however, the hope lingers in me and many others that India shall survive this death dance and occupy the moral height that should belong to her after the training, however imperfect, in non-violence for an unbroken period of thirty-two years since 1915."

New Delhi, 29-11-'47

*Harijan*, 7-12-1947

## WORKING OF AHIMSA

This evening when as usual before the prayer meeting the audience was asked if there was any objector to the Koran verses being recited as part of the prayer, one member spoke up and persisted in his objection. Gandhiji had made it clear that if there was such objection, he would neither have public prayer nor the after-prayer speech on current events. Consequently, he sent word that there would be neither prayer nor speech before the public. But the gathering would not disperse without seeing Gandhiji. He, therefore, went to the rostrum and said a few words on the reason for abstention and the working of Ahimsa as he understood it. He said that it was unseemly for anyone to object to the prayer, especially, when it was on a private lawn. Nevertheless, his Ahimsa warned him against disregarding even one objector when an overwhelming majority were likely to overawe one person into silence. It would be otherwise if the whole audience objected. It would then be his duty to have the prayer even at the risk of being molested. There was also the further consideration that the majority should not be disappointed for the sake of one objector. The remedy was simple. If the majority restrained themselves and entertained no anger against, or evil design on, the solitary objector it would be his duty to hold the prayer. The possibility, however, was that if the whole audience was non-violent in intention and action, the objector would restrain himself. Such he held was the working of non-violence.

Birla House, New Delhi, 30-10-'47

*Harijan*, 9-11-1947

## FIRM ON NON-VIOLENCE

A correspondent rebuked Gandhiji for having dared to advise Mr. Winston Churchill, Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese, when they were about to lose their all, that they should adopt his technique of non-violence. The writer of the letter then went on to say that if he could give that advice when it was safe for him to do so, why did he abandon his non-violence when his own friends in the Congress Government had forsaken it and even sent armed assistance to Kashmir? The letter concluded by inviting Gandhiji to point out definitely how the raiders were to be opposed non-violently by the Kashmiris.

Replying Gandhiji said that he was sorry for the ignorance betrayed by the writer. The audience would remember that he had repeatedly said that he had no influence in the matter over his friends in the Union Cabinet. He held on to his views on non-violence as firmly as ever, but he could not impose his views on his best friends, as they were, in the Cabinet. He could not expect them to act against their convictions and everybody should be satisfied with his confession that he had lost his original hold upon his friends. The question put by the writer was quite opposite. Gandhiji's answer was simple. His Ahimsa forbade him from denying credit, where it was due, even though the creditor was a believer in violence. Thus, though he did not accept Subhas Bose's belief in violence and his consequent action, he had not refrained from giving unstinted praise to him for his patriotism, resourcefulness and bravery. Similarly, though he did not approve of the use of arms by the Union Government for aiding the Kashmiris and though he could not approve of Sheikh Abdulla's resort to arms, he could not possibly withhold admiration for either for their resourceful and praiseworthy conduct, especially, if both the relieving troops and the Kashmiri defenders died heroically to a man. He knew that if they could do so, they would perhaps change the face of India.



But if the defence was purely non-violent in intention and action, he would not use the word 'perhaps', for, he would be sure of change in the face of India even to the extent of converting to the defender's view the Union Cabinet, if not even the Pakistan Cabinet.

The non-violent technique, he would suggest, would be no armed assistance to the defenders. Non-violent assistance could be sent from the Union without stint. But the defenders, whether they got such assistance or not, would defy the might of the raiders or even a disciplined army in overwhelming numbers. And defenders dying at their post of duty without malice and without anger in their hearts against the assailants, and without the use of any arms including even their fists would mean an exhibition of heroism as yet unknown to history. Kashmir would then become a holy land shedding its fragrance not only throughout India, but the world. Having described non-violent action he had to confess his own impotence, in that his word lacked the strength, which perfect mastery over self as described in the concluding lines of the second chapter of the Gita, gave. He lacked the *tapashcharya* requisite for the purpose. He could only pray and invite the audience to pray with him to God that if it pleased Him, He might arm him with the qualifications he had just described.

Birla House, New Delhi, 5-11-'47

*Harijan*, 16-11-1947

## DEATH—COURAGEOUS OR COWARDLY

A Bengali friend writes a long letter in Bengali on the exodus from East Pakistan. Its purport is that though workers like him understand and appreciate my argument and distinction between death—courageous and cowardly—the common man detects in my statement a not too hidden advice in favour of migration. "If death is to be the lot in any case, courage becomes of no count; for man lives but to escape death," he says.

This argument seems to beg the question. Man does not live but to escape death. If he does so, he is advised not to do so. He is advised to learn to love death as well as life, if not more so. A hard saying, harder to act up to, one may say. Every worthy act is difficult. Ascent is always difficult. Descent is easy and often slippery. Life becomes livable only to the extent that death is treated as a friend, never as an enemy. To conquer life's temptations, summon death to your aid. In order to postpone death a coward surrenders honour, wife, daughter and all. A courageous man prefers death to the surrender of self-respect. When the time comes, as it conceivably can, I would not leave my advice to be inferred, but it will be given in precise language. That today my advice might be followed only by one or none does not detract from its value. A beginning is always made by a few, even one.

New Delhi, 23-11-'47

*Harijan*, 30-11-1947

## NO LIMITATIONS

A correspondent says in substance :

"Individual Ahimsa I can understand. Corporate Ahimsa between friends is also intelligible. But you talk of Ahimsa towards avowed enemies. This is like a mirage. It will be a mercy if you give up this obstinacy of yours. If you do not, you will forfeit the esteem you enjoy. What is worse, you, being considered a Mahatma, mislead many credulous persons to their own and society's harm."

That non-violence which only an individual can use is not of much use in terms of society. Man is a social being. His accomplishments to be of use must be such as any person with sufficient diligence can attain. That which can be exercised only among friends is of value only as a spark of non-violence. It cannot merit the appellation of Ahimsa. 'Enmity vanishes before Ahimsa,' is a great aphorism. It means that the greatest enmity requires an equal measure of Ahimsa for its abatement. Cultivation of this virtue may need long practice, even extending to several births. It does not become useless on that account. Travelling along the route, the pilgrim will meet richer experiences from day to day so that he may have a glimpse of the beauty he is destined to see at the top. This will add to his zest. No one is entitled to infer from this that the path will be a continuous carpet of roses without thorns. A poet has sung that the way to reach God accrues only to the very brave, never to the faint-hearted. The atmosphere today is so much saturated with poison that one refuses to recollect the wisdom of the ancients and to perceive the varied little experiences of Ahimsa in action. 'A bad turn is neutralized by a good', is a wise saying of daily experience in practice. Why can we not see that if the sum total of the world's activities was destructive, it would have come to an end long ago? Love, otherwise Ahimsa, sustains this planet of ours.

This much must be admitted. The precious grace of life has to be strenuously cultivated, naturally so because

it is uplifting. Descent is easy, not so ascent. A large majority of us being undisciplined, our daily experience is that of fighting or swearing at one another on the slightest pretext.

This, the richest grace of Ahimsa will descend easily upon the owner of hard discipline.

New Delhi, 8-12-'47

*Harijan*, 14-12-1947

## 154

## MY FAST AS A PROTEST

One fasts for health's sake under laws governing health, fasts as a penance for a wrong done and felt as such. In these fasts, the fasting one need not believe in Ahimsa. There is, however, a fast which a votary of non-violence sometimes feels impelled to undertake by way of protest against some wrong done by society, and this he does when he as a votary of Ahimsa has no other remedy left. Such an occasion has come my way.

When on September 9th, I returned to Delhi from Calcutta, it was to proceed to the West Punjab. But that was not to be. Gay Delhi looked a city of the dead. As I alighted from the train I observed gloom on every face I saw. Even the Sardar, whom humour and the joy that humour gives never desert, was no exception this time. The cause of it I did not know. He was on the platform to receive me. He lost no time in giving me the sad news of the disturbances that had taken place in the Metropolis of the Union. At once I saw that I had to be in Delhi and 'do or die'. There is apparent calm brought about by prompt military and police action. But there is storm within the breast. It may burst forth any day. This I count as no fulfilment of the vow to 'do' which alone can keep me from death, the incomparable friend. I yearn for heart friendship between the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims. It subsisted between them the other day. Today it is non-existent. It is a state that no Indian patriot worthy of the name can contemplate with equanimity. Though the Voice within has been beckoning for a long

time, I have been shutting my ears to it, lest it may be the voice of Satan otherwise called my weakness. I never like to feel resourceless, a Satyagrahi never should. Fasting is his last resort in the place of the sword—his or other's. I have no answer to return to the Muslim friends who see me from day to day as to what they should do. My impotence has been gnawing at me of late. It will go immediately the fast is undertaken. I have been brooding over it for the last three days. The final conclusion has flashed upon me and it makes me happy. No man, if he is pure, has anything more precious to give than his life. I hope and pray that I have that purity in me to justify the step.

### **Worthy of Blessing**

I ask you all to bless the effort and to pray for me and with me. The fast begins from the first meal tomorrow. The period is indefinite and I may drink water with or without salts and sour limes. It will end when and if I am satisfied that there is a reunion of hearts of all the communities brought about without any outside pressure, but from an awakened sense of duty. The reward will be the regaining of India's dwindling prestige and her fast fading sovereignty over the heart of Asia and therethrough the world. I flatter myself with the belief that the loss of her soul by India will mean the loss of the hope of the aching, storm-tossed and hungry world. Let no friend, or foe if there be one, be angry with me. There are friends who do not believe in the method of the fast for the reclamation of the human mind. They will bear with me and extend to me the same liberty of action that they claim for themselves. With God as my supreme and sole counsellor, I felt that I must take the decision without any other adviser. If I have made a mistake and discover it, I shall have no hesitation in proclaiming it from the housetop and retracing my faulty step. There is little chance of making such a discovery. If there is clear indication, as I claim there is, of the Inner Voice, it will not be gainsaid. I plead for all absence of argument and inevitable endorsement of the step. If the whole of India responds or at least Delhi does, the fast might be soon ended.



### No softness

But whether it ends soon or late or never, let there be no softness in dealing with what may be termed as a crisis. Critics have regarded some of my previous fasts as coercive and held that on merits the verdict would have gone against my stand but for the pressure exercised by the fasts. What value can an adverse verdict have when the purpose is demonstrably sound? A pure fast, like duty, is its own reward. I do not embark upon it for the sake of the result it may bring. I do so because I must. Hence, I urge everybody dispassionately to examine the purpose and let me die, if I must, in peace which I hope is ensured. Death for me would be a glorious deliverance rather than that I should be a helpless witness of the destruction of India, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. That destruction is certain if Pakistan ensures no equality of status and security of life and property for all professing the various faiths of the world, and if India copies her. Only then Islam dies in the two Indias, not in the world. But Hinduism and Sikhism have no world outside India. Those who differ from me will be honoured by me for their resistance however implacable. Let my fast quicken conscience, not deaden it. Just contemplate the rot that has set in beloved India and you will rejoice to think that there is an humble son of hers who is strong enough and possibly pure enough to take the happy step. If he is neither, he is a burden on earth. The sooner he disappears and clears the Indian atmosphere of the burden the better for him and all concerned.

I would beg of all friends not to rush to Birla House nor try to dissuade me or be anxious for me. I am in God's hands. Rather, they should turn the searchlights inwards, for this is essentially a testing time for all of us. Those who remain at their post of duty and perform it diligently and well, now more so than hitherto, will help me and the cause in every way. The fast is a process of self-purification.

Birla House, New Delhi, 12-1-'48

*Harijan*, 18-1-1948

## THE BREAKING OF THE FAST

The feverish anxiety into which the whole city of Delhi and the country at large had been plunged was terminated when Gandhiji broke his fast at Birla House, New Delhi, today at 12-45 p.m. with due solemnity. Earlier in the day, representatives of all the important groups and organizations in the city, including representatives of the refugees and from the three worst affected parts of the city, namely, Karol Bagh, Sabzi Mandi and Paharganj, had assembled under the chairmanship of Dr. Rajendra Prasad at the latter's residence and put their signatures to a seven-point declaration covering the conditions laid down by Gandhiji for breaking his fast. The document was recorded in both the Persian and Devanagari scripts at Gandhiji's special insistence. At the meeting were also present Maulana Azad Saheb and Major General Shah Nawazkhan. Delhi Muslims were represented by Maulanas Hifzur Rahman and Ahmed Saeed of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema and Maulana Habibur-Rahman. Goswami Shri Ganesh Datta, Shri Basantlal and Shri Narain Das represented the Rashtriya Sevak Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha. There were too the representatives of the various Sikh organizations. They then all repaired (numbering over 100) to Birla House, where they assembled in Gandhiji's room, to request him to break the fast. Maulana Saheb and Pandit Jawaharlalji had arrived there already and Janab Zahid Hussain Saheb, the Pakistan's High Commissioner, came in a little later.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad opened the proceedings by narrating to Gandhiji how they had all assembled on the previous night at the former's residence and after full discussion decided to sign the declaration then and there. But as representatives of some organizations were not present in that meeting, they felt that they should not go to Gandhiji immediately with the signed document but wait till the remaining signatures were obtained. They

had accordingly met again in the morning when all those who were absent during the previous night's meeting came and gave their signatures. It was found in the course of the morning meeting, Dr. Rajendra Prasad reported, that even those who had some lingering doubts on the previous night were now confident that they could ask Gandhiji with a full sense of their responsibility to break the fast. As the President of the Congress, Dr. Rajendra Prasad said that he had signed the document in view of the guarantee which they had all jointly and severally given. Janab Khurshid, the Chief Commissioner, and Shri Randhawa, Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, who were present, had signed the document on behalf of the administration. It had been decided to set up a number of committees to implement the pledge. Dr. Rajendra Prasad hoped that Gandhiji would now terminate his fast.

Shri Deshabandhu Gupta, speaking next, described some touching scenes of fraternization between the Hindus and Muslims which he had witnessed when a procession of about 150 Muslims was taken out that morning in Sabzi Mandi and was received with ovation and offered fruit and refreshments by the Hindu inhabitants of that locality.

Gandhiji replying said that what they had told him had touched him deeply. They had given him all that he had asked for. But if their words meant that they held themselves responsible for communal peace in Delhi only and what happened in other places was no concern of theirs, then their guarantee was nothing worth and he would feel and they too would one day realize that it was a great blunder on his part to have given up his fast. As an illustration he referred to the report of the happenings in Allahabad that had appeared in the Press. Representatives of both the R.S.S. and the Hindu Mahasabha were among the signatories to the seven-point declaration. If they were sincere in their professions, surely, they could not be indifferent to outbreaks of madness in places other than Delhi. It would be a fraud upon God if they did so. Delhi was the heart of the Indian Dominion and they (the representatives gathered there) were the cream of

Delhi. If they could not make the whole of India realize that the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were all brothers, it would bode ill for the future of both the Dominions. What would happen to Hindustan if they quarrelled with one another?

Here Gandhiji broke down owing to overwhelming feeling as he explained on resumption. What he had said was repeated aloud by one or two friends sitting near him.

Resuming his remarks after the interval, Gandhiji again appealed to them to search well their hearts so that they might not take any step which they would have to regret afterwards. The occasion demanded of them bravery of the highest order. They should clearly realize the implications of their pledge. It was nothing less than that what they had achieved in Delhi had to be realized in the whole of India. That did not mean that the ideal could be realized in a day. But it did mean that whilst in the past they had turned their face towards Satan, they had now resolved to turn it Godward. If, in their hearts, they did not accept what he had placed before them or if they had made up their minds that it was beyond them, they should plainly tell him so.

There could be nothing more wrong on their part, continued Gandhiji, than to hold that Hindustan belonged only to the Hindus and the Muslims could have no place in it, or on the reverse that Pakistan belonged to the Muslims only and the Hindus and Sikhs could have no place in it. He wanted the refugees to understand that if they set things right in Delhi, as he had suggested, that was the only way to set things right in Pakistan too. He reminded them that he was not a man to shirk another fast, should he afterwards discover that he had been deceived or had deceived himself into breaking it prematurely. They should, therefore, act with circumspection and cent per-cent sincerity. He invited the representatives of Mussalmans who had been meeting him frequently to tell him whether they were satisfied that the conditions in Delhi were now such as to warrant breaking the fast on his part.

Addressing next a few words to the Muslims especially, he asked if there was any ground for the suspicion



that the Muslims did not regard India as their country. They lived in it in the midst of the Hindus because they could not help it, but one day they had to part company. He hoped that that suspicion was baseless. Similarly, if there was a Hindu who regarded the Muslims as *yavanas* or *asuras* incapable of realizing God, he was guilty of the worst blasphemy, which could possibly have no room in the covenant which they had signed.

He then referred to a book which a Muslim friend had lovingly presented him at Patna. In that book the writer had propounded that according to the Koran, *kaffirs* (i.e. Hindus) were worse than poisonous reptiles and fit only to be exterminated. Not only was there no sin in using every conceivable variety of force or fraud to compass that end, it was meritorious in the eyes of God. He was sure that no God-fearing Muslims could subscribe to or even secretly sympathize with that creed. Some dubbed Hindus as image worshippers, proceeded Gandhiji. But it was not the stone image which they worshipped but the God within, without Whom not a particle of matter existed. If a devotee saw God in an image, it was not a thing for anyone to cavil at. Granting that his belief was a delusion, it deluded nobody but himself. It required magnanimity and breadth of outlook to understand and appreciate the religious convictions and practices of others. It was the same thing if they considered the Koran or the Granth Saheb as God.

Concluding, Gandhiji remarked that if they fully accepted the implications of their pledge, they should release him from Delhi so that he might be free to go to Pakistan. In his absence they should welcome such refugees from Pakistan as might want to return to their homes. The latter were none too happy over there just as the Hindus in the Indian Dominion were none too happy to lose large numbers of Muslim artisans and craftsmen. It was not easy to reproduce in a day traditional skill that had been acquired through generations. It was a loss on both sides which no sane people would like willingly to perpetuate.



Gandhiji ended by once more asking them to turn the searchlight inward and not to deceive themselves or others by asking him to give up his fast, if what he had said did not find a responsive echo in their hearts.

Maulana Saheb Abul Kalam Azad, being next asked to say something, remarked that so far as the guarantee of communal peace was concerned it could be given only by the representatives of the citizens of Delhi. He, however, did not want to leave unchallenged the Muslim friends' observation to which Gandhiji had referred, as it referred to the teachings of Islam. He had no hesitation in characterizing it as a libel on Islam. He quoted a verse from the Koran which was to the effect that all mankind are brethren, irrespective of their race or religion. The remarks to which Gandhiji had referred were abhorrent to the teachings of Islam. They were only indicative of the insanity that had of late, seized some sections of the people.

He was followed by Maulana Hifzur Rahman Saheb, who categorically repudiated the allegation that his co-religionists did not regard India as their country which claimed their full and undivided allegiance, but only as a place where they were forced to live by expediency and by the compulsion of circumstances. Their thirty years' unbroken record of service of the nationalist cause gave the lie to that charge. They regarded it as an insult to their nationalism to be asked to reiterate their loyalty to India. He recalled how during the recent disturbances at one stage their Congress friends and colleagues had offered to provide a safe asylum to them outside Delhi as they were not sure that they would be able to give them adequate protection in Delhi. But they had declined that offer and had preferred to stay in and go about the city without any police escort, trusting to God alone. Speaking of the Jamiat, he could say that its members were staunch followers of Maulana Azad Saheb and the Congress. Those who had left for Pakistan had done so out of fear for their lives and worse. They all wanted to remain in India as citizens of India with self-respect and honour,

in their own right, not on the mercy or sufferance of anybody. He asserted that if India were to be attacked they would all defend it to the last man as their country. They had plainly said on more than one occasion that those who were not prepared to do so should leave India and go to Pakistan.

Describing next the change that had come over the city as a result of Gandhiji's fast, he said that they regarded it as a happy augury and a presage of things to come. They were satisfied that the tide had definitely turned and was now fast flowing in the direction of communal harmony and peace when previously bitterness and hatred ran riot. Now that the administration had underwritten the assurance given by the representatives of the people, they were satisfied that they would be implemented, though it might take some time. He, therefore, joined Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his appeal that Gandhiji should break the fast.

After Shri Ganesh Datt had on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha and the R.S.S. reiterated that appeal, Janab Zahid Hussain Saheb addressed a few words to Gandhiji. He was there, he said, to convey to Gandhiji how deeply concerned the people in Pakistan were about him and how they were daily inundating him with anxious inquiries about his (Gandhiji's) health. It was their heart's desire that circumstances might soon prevail which would enable him to break the fast. If there was anything that he would fittingly do towards that end he was ready and so were the people of Pakistan.

Janab Zahid Hussain Saheb was followed by Janab Khurshid and Shri Randhawa who on behalf of the administration reiterated the assurance that all the conditions mentioned in the citizens' pledge would be duly implemented, and no effort would be spared to restore to the Indian capital its glorious old tradition of communal harmony and peace.

Sardar Harbans Singh endorsed on behalf of the Sikhs what his predecessors had said. Gandhiji then expressed his readiness to break the fast, which was done with the usual ceremony of prayer at which texts from the

Japanese, Muslim and Parsi scriptures were recited followed by the *mantra*:

“Lead me from untruth to truth,  
From darkness to light,  
From death to immortality.”

A Hindustani hymn and the Christian hymn: “When I survey the wondrous cross”, were then sung by the girl inmates of the Ashram followed by Ramadhun. A glass of fruit juice was handed by Maulana Saheb and Gandhiji broke the fast after fruit was distributed to and partaken by all present.

New Delhi, 18-1-'48

*Harijan*, 25-1-1948

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## FROM THE LAST POST-PRAYER SPEECHES

### **Bomb at the Prayer**

Speaking after prayers on Wednesday evening, Gandhi referred to the previous day's bomb explosion in the Birla House compound. He had been receiving anxious enquiries and praise for being unruffled at the accident. He thought that it was military practice and, therefore, nothing to worry about. He had not realized till after the prayers that it was a bomb explosion and that the bomb was meant against him. God only knew how he would have behaved in front of a bomb aimed at him and exploding. Therefore, he deserved no praise. He would deserve a certificate only if he fell as a result of such an explosion and yet retained a smile on his face and no malice against the doer. What he wanted to say was that no one should look down upon the misguided youth who had thrown the bomb. He probably looked upon Gandhiji as an enemy of Hinduism. After all, has not the Gita said that whenever there was an evil-minded person damaging religion, God sent some one to put an end to his life? That celebrated verse has a special meaning. The youth should realize that those who differed from him were not necessarily evil. The evil had no life apart from the toleration of good people. No

one should believe that he or she was so perfect that he or she was sent by God to punish evil-doers, as the accused seemed to flatter himself he was.

He (Gandhiji) had heard that the youth had without permission occupied a *masjid* for lack of other accommodation and now that the police were getting all mosques evacuated, he resented the act. It was a wrong thing on his part to have occupied the *masjid* in the first place and it was doubly wrong to defy the authorities, who asked him to vacate it.

### **Serving Hinduism**

To those who were at the back of the youth, he would appeal to desist from such activity. That was not the way to save Hinduism. Hinduism could be saved only by Gandhiji's method. Gandhiji had practised Hinduism from early childhood. His nurse had taught him to invoke Rama when he feared evil spirits. Later on he had come in contact with Christians, Muslims and others and, after making a fair study of other religions, had stuck to Hinduism. He was as firm in his faith today as in his early childhood. He believed God would make him an instrument of saving the religion that he loved, cherished and practised. In any case, one had to have constant practice and acquaintance with the fundamentals of religion before being qualified for becoming God's instrument.

### **Pity the Bomb Thrower**

He had told the Inspector General of Police also, not to harass him in any way. They should try to win him over and convert him to right thinking and doing. He hoped that the youth and his guides would realize their error. For, it was a wrong done to Hinduism and the country. At the same time Gandhiji warned his hearers against being angry with the accused. He did not know that he was doing anything wrong. They should pity him. If they harboured resentment against Gandhiji's fast and had still pledged themselves to maintain peace in order to save an old servant of the nation, the guilt was theirs, not that of the young man who had thrown the bomb. If, on the other hand, they had signed the Peace Pledge



whole-heartedly, persons like the young man were ultimately bound to come to their way of thinking.

Gandhiji said that he expected the audience to go on with the prayers in spite of bomb explosions or a shower of bullets. He was glad to learn that a poor unlettered woman was the cause of the arrest of the miscreant. If the heart was sound, if there was right thought, lack of letters was not of any consequence. He congratulated the unlettered sister on her simple bravery.

Birla House, New Delhi, 21-1-'48

### **Poverty No Shame**

A difficulty to which his attention was drawn was that while the Congress had been in the wilderness it had set before the people the ideal of service, self-denial and simplicity. In those days it was difficult to collect even a lakh of rupees. Today, the Congress Government was in charge of crores of rupees and could raise as much as it liked. Were they to spend it as if there was no change from foreign rule to indigenous rule? Some people seemed to think that India's leaders and ambassadors must live and spend money in a style befitting their independent status and vie with independent America and England in stylishness. They thought that such expenditure was necessary in order to uphold India's prestige in foreign countries. Gandhiji did not think so. There was no merit in hiding our poverty. India's status in the world depended upon her moral supremacy which her passive resistance had brought her. In this she had no rival as yet, for the other nations, great or small, were proud of their armaments and military valour. That was their capital. India possessed only her moral capital, which increased with the spending. On any other condition the Congress claim to revolutionize values, when they came into power, would be forfeited. People criticized the Ministers for accepting high salaries and not bringing the artificial British standard down to the natural Indian standard. These critics knew nothing of the private life of their Ministers. But the fashion was for Congressmen and others to expect high emoluments wholly out of keeping with what one was making out of office.



One who managed to live on Rs. 150 per month would not hesitate to demand and expect Rs. 500. Such persons felt that they would not be appreciated unless they demanded high salaries and lived in the old Civil Service style and dressed up as such. That was not the way to serve India. They should not forget that a man's value did not depend upon the amount of money that he earned. The process of self-purification, which they all must share, demanded right thought and action.

Birla House, New Delhi, 22-1-'48

### **How to Deal with Traitors**

Gandhiji had received a telegram from Meerut. It said that they had no ill feelings against the Nationalist Muslims, but they did not believe that those League Muslims who, until yesterday, had been collecting arms and even now intended to help Pakistan, could ever be loyal to the Union. He (Gandhiji) would have to repent if he put his trust in them. They also said that religion and politics were quite separate and non-violence could never work in politics.

It was rather late in the day to tell him, he said, that non-violence could not work in politics. In politics they could not begin with distrust. Those in charge of the Government were men of great courage and self-sacrifice. They would deal with traitors when the occasion came. Traitors might be found in any community and not only among the Muslims. They had decided to live with the Muslims as brothers and he wanted them to stick to their resolve. All Leaguers were not bad. They should report against those who indulged in questionable activities and let the Government deal with them as severely as it liked. They must on no account take the law into their own hands. That would be barbarous.

Birla House, New Delhi, 23-1-'48

### **Independence Day**

This day, 26th January, is Independence Day. This observance was quite appropriate when we were fighting for independence we had not seen nor handled. Now! We have handled it and we seem to be disillusioned. At least I am, even if you are not.

What are we celebrating today? Surely not our disillusionment. We are entitled to celebrate the hope that the worst is over and that we are on the road to showing the lowliest of the villager that it means his freedom from serfdom, and that he is no longer a serf born to serve the cities and towns of India but that he is destined to exploit the city dwellers for the advertisement of the finished fruits of well thought out labours, that he is the salt of the Indian earth, that it means also equality of all classes and creeds, never the domination and superiority of the major community over a minor, however insignificant it may be in number or influence. Let us not defer the hope and make the heart sick. Yet what are the strikes and a variety of lawlessness but a deferring of the hope? These are symptoms of our sickness and weakness. Let labour realize its dignity and strength. Capital has neither dignity nor strength compared to labour. These the man in the street also has. In a well-ordered democratic society there is no room, no occasion for lawlessness or strikes. In such a society there are ample lawful means for vindicating justice. Violence, veiled or unveiled, must be taboo. Strikes in Cawnpore, coal mines or elsewhere mean material loss to the whole society not excluding the strikers themselves. I need not be reminded that this declamation does not lie well in the mouth of one like me who has been responsible for so many successful strikes. If there be such critics they ought not to forget that then there was neither independence nor the kind of legislation we have now. I wonder if we can remain free from the fever of power politics or the bid for power which afflicts the political world, the East and the West. Before leaving this topic of the day, let us permit ourselves to hope that though geographically and politically India is divided into two, at heart we shall ever be friends and brothers helping and respecting one another and be one for the outside world.

Birla House, New Delhi, 26-1-'48

### **Urs at Mehrauli**

Gandhiji described his morning visit to the *Dargah Sharif* at Mehrauli. The *urs* had attracted a large concourse

of Muslims and what gladdened Gandhiji was to find an equal number of Hindus and Sikhs. Due to some wild and misleading rumours, however, the attendance of Muslims was thinner than in the previous years. It was a matter of shame that man should have to be afraid of man. Gandhiji was also distressed to see the costly marble trellis damaged. It was no answer to say that similar or worse things had happened in Pakistan. Had we fallen so low as to stoop to such acts of vandalism? Granting that such incidents had occurred on a larger scale in Pakistan, it would be improper to institute comparisons in evil doing. Even if the whole world did wrong, should we do likewise? If today Gandhiji took to evil courses, would it not distress them? For him it would be worse than death. Similarly, they had reason to feel ashamed at the damage done to the *Dargah*. The friend in charge had related to the audience the history of the shrine and Gandhiji felt that it behoved them all to show to such a holy place the veneration due to it.

Birla House, New Delhi, 27-1-'48

### **Satyagraha in South Africa**

Gandhiji referred to the Satyagraha launched by the Indian community in South Africa. Indians in South Africa were not permitted free entry into the various provinces. In defence of their honour as men and women, the Satyagrahis had marched to Volkurst and then motored to Johannesburg where they held a meeting. This was a courageous step and if the people as a whole became Satyagrahis in the right spirit, victory was sure to crown their efforts. In the question of the march the Government had shown a degree of tolerance and not effected any arrests. But with the progress of the movement, it was feared that arrests would follow. So long, however, as the movement was conducted peacefully, there was no reason for the Government to resort to persecution. Why should whites consider it *infra dig* to talk matters over with non-whites? Gandhiji suggested that the authorities should contact the Satyagraha leaders and satisfy their reasonable demands. Today, India and Pakistan, just become new Dominions,

were entitled to expect friendly treatment from sister Dominions of the Commonwealth. But if the South African Government still treated Indians as inferiors on the score of colour, he had no hesitation in declaring that they would be putting themselves in the wrong. It was unthinkable that Dominions should quarrel among themselves.

Birla House, New Delhi, 28-1-'48

### **Their Servant**

Gandhiji next spoke of a deputation of about forty refugees from Bannu, who had called on him in the afternoon. Poor men, they were in an afflicted state and he prized their *darshan*. As he had other engagements, they were good enough at his request to have their statements recorded by Shri Brijkrishna. One of them, however, exclaimed that they owed their miseries to him and angrily asked him to leave them alone and retire to the Himalayas. Gandhiji asked him at whose bidding he should go. Some were annoyed and a few went to the length of abusing him, while many eulogized his efforts. The only course, therefore, open to him was to follow the dictates of God who spoke to men in the inmost chamber of the heart. There were women too in the company. He regarded them as his brothers or sisters. God was our one true friend. We were entirely in His hands. He would not care to go and enjoy the peace of the mountains but would be content with what peace he could extract from the surrounding turmoil. He, therefore, preferred to stay in their midst, adding that if they all went to the Himalayas, he might follow them as their servant.

### **Bread Labour**

Proceeding Gandhiji referred to the complaints brought to him that the refugees, though provided with food, shelter and clothing, were averse to any work. If a man was in distress, the key to his happiness lay in labour. God did not create man to eat, drink and make merry. The Gita taught that one should perform *yajna* (bread labour) and partake of the fruits of that labour. Millionaires who ate without work were parasites. Even they should eat by the sweat of their brow or should go without food. The only

permissible exception was the disabled for whom society provided. There was a variety of work for the refugees to do, such as maintaining sanitation including cleaning of latrines, spinning and other crafts. They should learn to make the best of the situation in which they found themselves.

### **Kisans**

Gandhiji then spoke about peasants. If he had his say, our Governor-General and our Premier would be drawn from the Kisans. In his childhood he had learnt from school books that the Kisans were heirs to the kingdom of the earth. This applied to those who laboured on the land and ate from what they produced. Such Kisans to be worthy of high offices might be illiterate provided they had robust common sense, great personal bravery, unimpeachable integrity and patriotism above suspicion. As real producers of wealth, they were verily the masters while we had enslaved them. It had been suggested to Gandhiji that the higher secretariat posts should also be manned by Kisans. He would endorse this suggestion provided they were suitable and had knowledge of the work expected of them. When Kisans of this type were forthcoming, he would publicly ask ministers and others to make room for them.

Birla House, New Delhi, 29-1-'48

*Harijan*, 8-2-1948



## HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

[The following is the constitution, drafted by Gandhiji, for the Congress on the day of his assassination. His intention was to show how the Congress which was till now mainly concerned with achieving political independence may convert itself into an Association for the Service of the People (Lok Sevak Sangh), and work for the establishment of a non-violent society. —Ed.]

Though split into two, India having attained political independence through means devised by the Indian National Congress, the Congress in its present shape and form, i.e. as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine, has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns. The struggle for the ascendancy of civil over military power is bound to take place in India's progress towards its democratic goal. It must be kept out of unhealthy competition with political parties and communal bodies. For these and other similar reasons, the A.I.C.C. resolves to disband the existing Congress organization and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh under the following rules with power to alter them as occasion may demand.

Every Panchayat of five adult men or women being villagers or village-minded shall form a unit.

Two such contiguous Panchayats shall form a working party under a leader elected from among themselves.

When there are one hundred such Panchayats, the fifty first grade leaders shall elect from among themselves a second grade leader and so on, the first grade leaders meanwhile working under the second grade leader. Parallel groups of two hundred Panchayats shall continue to be formed till they cover the whole of India, each succeeding group of Panchayats electing a second grade leader after the manner of the first. All second grade leaders shall serve jointly for the whole of India and severally for their respective areas. The second grade leaders may elect, when-

ever they deem necessary, from among themselves a chief who will, during pleasure, regulate and command all the groups.

(As the final formation of provinces or districts is still in a state of flux, no attempt has been made to divide this group of servants into Provincial or District Councils, and jurisdiction over the whole of India has been vested in the group or groups that may have been formed at any given time. It should be noted that this body of servants derive their authority or power from service ungrudgingly and wisely done to their master, the whole of India.)

1. Every worker shall be a habitual wearer of Khadi made from self-spun yarn or certified by the A.I.S.A. and must be a teetotaler. If a Hindu, he must have abjured untouchability in any shape or form in his own person or in his family and must be a believer in the ideal of inter-communal unity, equal respect and regard for all religions and equality of opportunity and status for all irrespective of race, creed or sex.

2. He shall come in personal contact with every villager within his jurisdiction.

3. He shall enrol and train workers from amongst the villagers and keep a register of all these.

4. He shall keep a record of his work from day to day.

5. He shall organize the villages so as to make them self-contained and self-supporting through their agriculture and handicrafts.

6. He shall educate the village folk in sanitation and hygiene and take all measures for prevention of ill health and disease among them.

7. He shall organize the education of the village folk from birth to death along the lines of Nayee Talim, in accordance with the policy laid down by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

8. He shall see that those whose names are missing on the statutory voters' roll are duly entered therein.

9. He shall encourage those who have not yet acquired the legal qualification, to acquire it for getting the right of franchise.

10. For the above purposes and others to be added from time to time, he shall train and fit himself in accordance with the rules laid down by the Sangh for the due performance of duty.

The Sangh shall affiliate the following autonomous bodies :

- \*1. A. I. S. A.
- †2. A. I. V. I. A.
- ‡3. Hindustani Talimi Sangh
- §4. Harijan Sevak Sangh
- ||5. Goseva Sangh

### Finance

The Sangh shall raise finances for the fulfilment of its mission, from among the villagers and others, special stress being laid on collection of the poor man's pice.

New Delhi, 29-1-'48

*Harijan*, 15-2-1948

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\*All India Spinners' Association.

†All India Village Industries Association.

‡Society for Basic Education.

§Society for service of "untouchables".

||Society for Cow Protection and Improvement.

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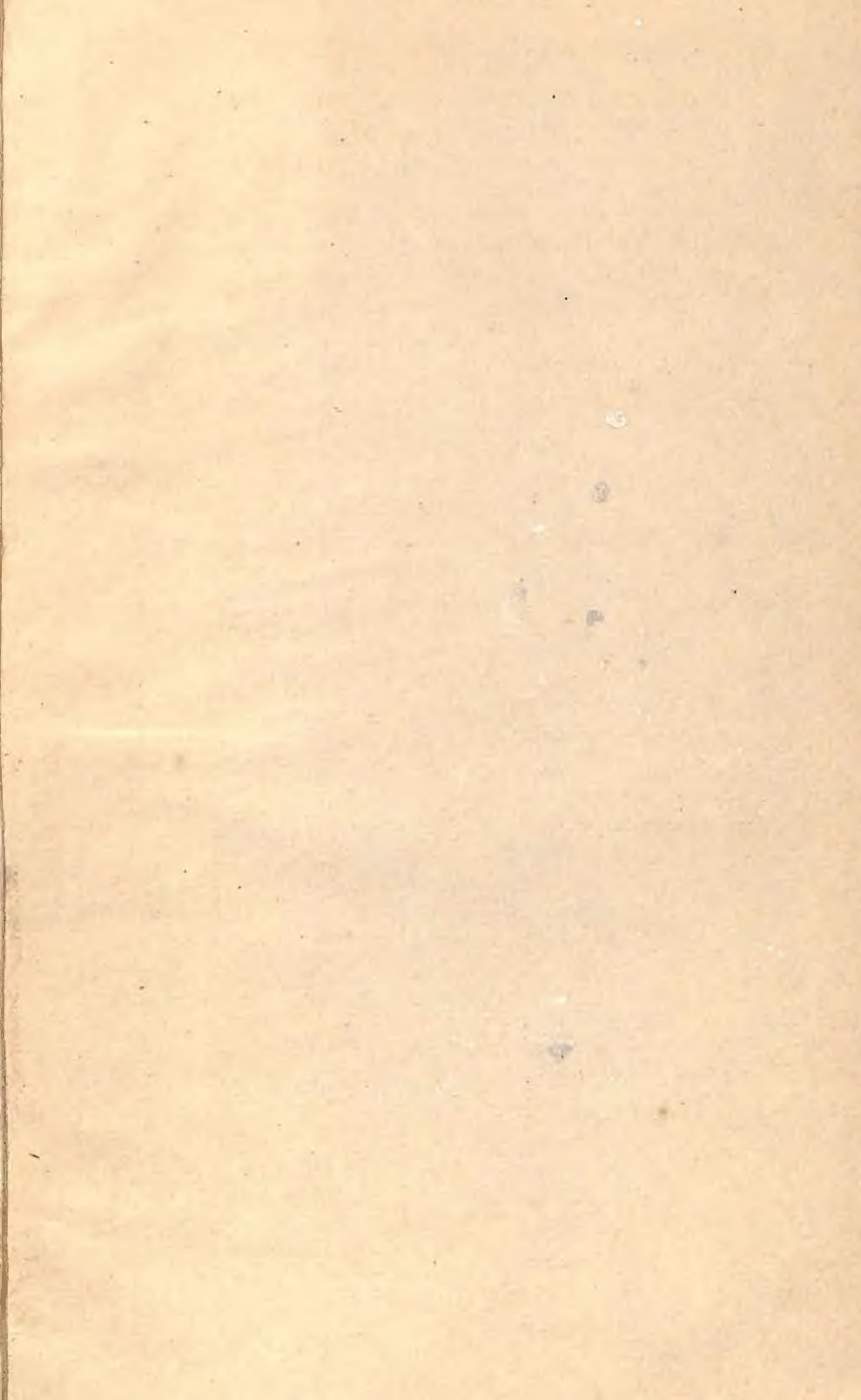
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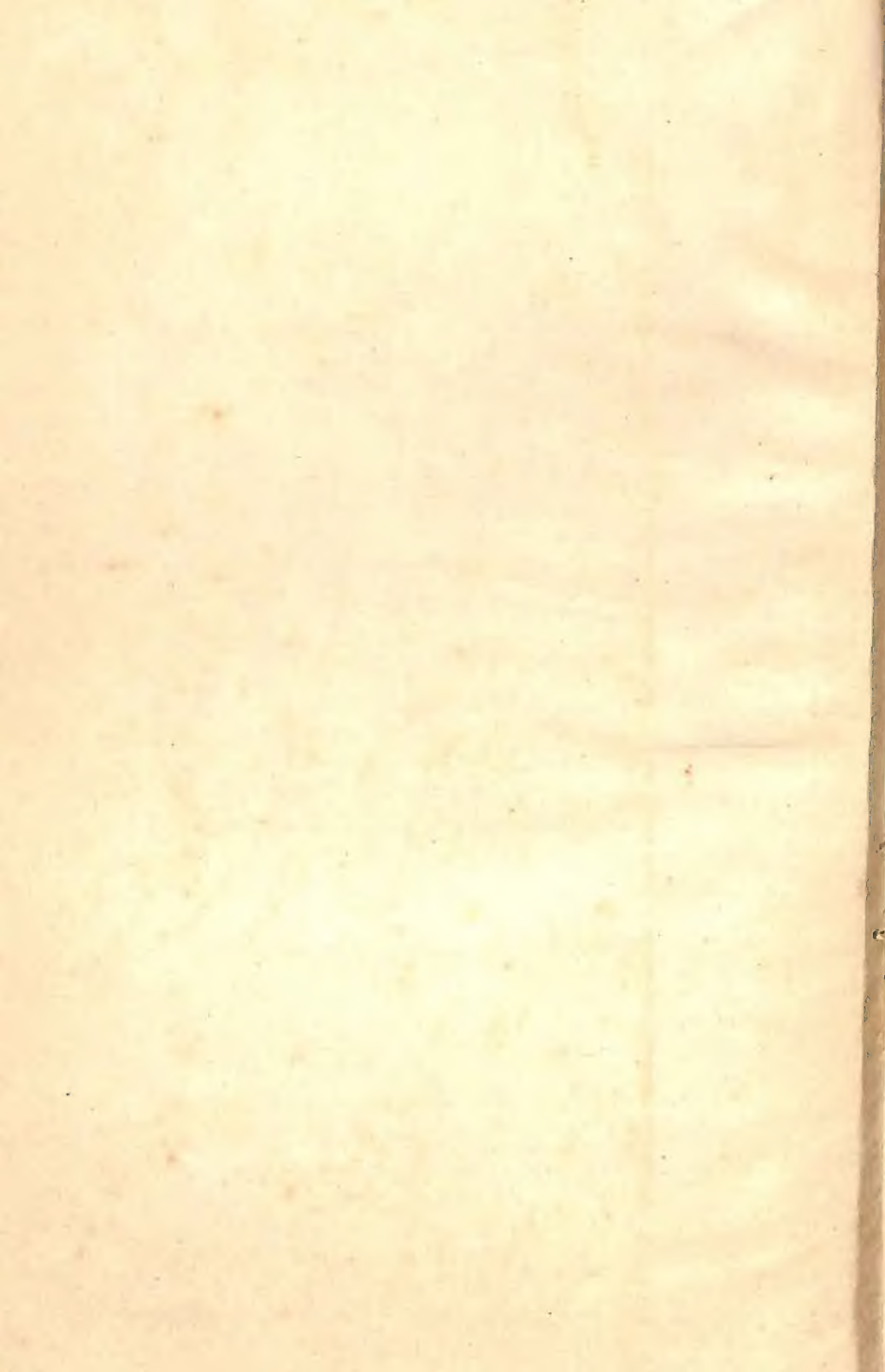
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